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Another Big Day?

Crouch has had two of his top performances against K-State's defense



Brian Hill

A LOT HAS CHANGED since Nebraska lost to Kansas State 40-30 two years ago in Manhattan.

Eric Crouch was a red-shirt freshman making his fourth start. Frank Solich was in Game 11 of his rookie season as head coach.

Crouch didn't play badly that day, rushing for 108 yards and passing for 139 yards and three touchdowns. The rushing total tied his career best at that point, and the passing total was his best that season.

Last season, in a 41-15 Nebraska romp in Lincoln, Crouch rushed for a career-high 158 yards and two touchdowns against the Wildcats. He also passed for 69 yards.

Kansas State had five turnovers in each of those games, with Michael Bishop at the helm in 1998 and current starter Jonathan Beasley leading the way last year. Nebraska, in the midst of a record-setting year for fumbles, put the ball on the ground 10 times in last year's game and lost three.

What does all that mean leading into this year's game?

Maybe nothing, but you might expect K-State to do everything it can to stop Crouch, and you might also expect several turnovers. With the late (6 p.m.) start, the weather might be a factor. And this game has seen its share of hard knocks in recent years. Clint Finley's bone-jarring block on a Wildcat offensive lineman during an interception return in 1997 and Travis Ochs' head-twisting (but not a facemask penalty,

according to the officials) tackle of Crouch in 1998 immediately come to mind.

Crouch, who will be making his 25th career start when the Huskers meet the Wildcats this week, has been extremely durable. Coaches and teammates talk about the junior quarterback's toughness in this week's feature story (Page 14) by contributing editor Mike Babcock.

Now a grizzled veteran, Crouch has taken over the No. 1 spot on Nebraska's career rushing list for quarterbacks. He gained 127 yards and Dan Alexander and Correll Buckhalter also topped the century mark as the Huskers took out their frustrations from the loss to Oklahoma by drubbing Kansas 56-17.

Kansas Coach Terry Allen, who had the misfortune of facing Nebraska after a loss for the third straight year, came away extremely impressed by this year's version.

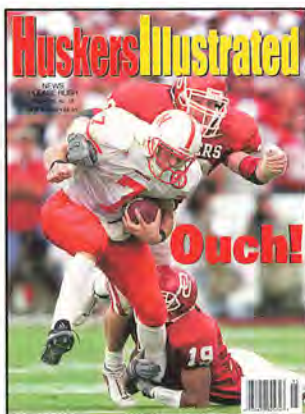
"That was the most dominating Nebraska football team that I have seen," he said. "They just totally took it to us offensively. We did not force them to punt all day."

The Cornhuskers used 98 players.

"Physically, their offense, the way they came after us, they just dominated the line of scrimmage," Allen said. "Their defensive front was a lot better than I thought they were last week against Oklahoma. I don't know if revenge is an appropriate term, but they stepped it up a notch.

"Programs of this caliber do."

They'll have to do it again this week in Manhattan. ■



ON THE COVER

Nebraska linebacker Carlos Polk celebrates after tackling Kansas quarterback Dylon Smith for a 3-yard loss on the first play from scrimmage. Photo by Scott Bruhn

Got Something To Say?

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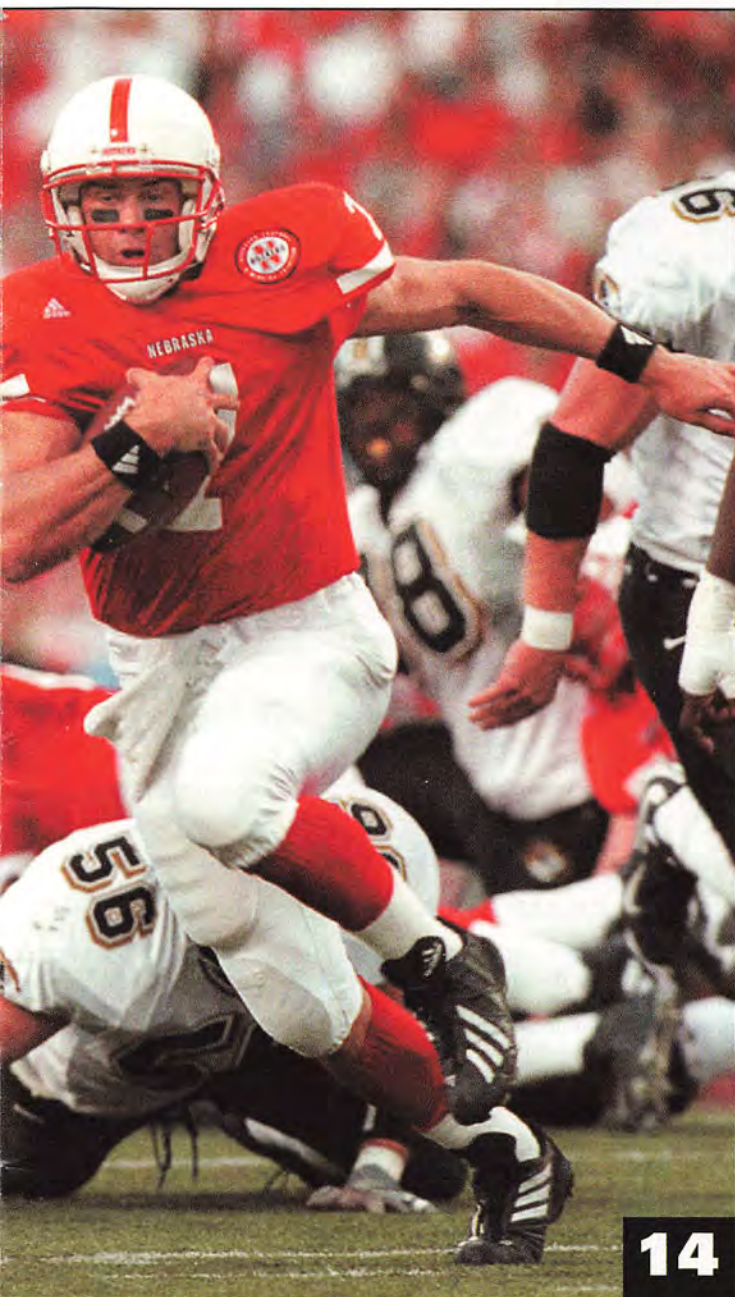
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Eric Crouch was prepared for the physical abuse to his body. By Mike Babcock

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A Strong Arm

Senior free safety Troy Watchorn (see profile, page 18) set a school record with pass interceptions in four consecutive games earlier this season. Last season, as often as not, he was practicing on the scout squad, particularly when the Cornhuskers were preparing to play passing teams.

Watchorn, a quarterback at Columbus, Neb., High School, played quarterback for the scout squad "because he has tremendous arm strength," said secondary coach George Darlington. "If they had a contest to see who could throw the ball with the most impact from 40 yards away, I'm sure he and (Tim) Demerath would compete with any of the quarterbacks we have. They have rockets for arms."

Demerath, a rover, is a junior walk-on from Plainview, Neb.

Watchorn's athletic ability is such that "he could be a very solid college quarterback," Darlington said. "He can run, too. He could play in both (types of offensive) schemes."

Darlington, like everyone else, marveled at Watchorn's record-setting interception streak.

"It is a little surprising because sometimes you just don't even have the opportunity," he said. "If the ball wasn't thrown anywhere near Troy, of course, he wouldn't have had the opportunity for the interception. But he's certainly a guy that's looking to intercept the football."

Watchorn's position is conducive to interception opportunities.



Troy Watchorn played in a total of 13 games his first three seasons.

"Safeties generally have an opportunity to intercept more passes, if they're freed up and playing zone, than other players on the team, unless a team is just throwing fades against corners all the time," Darlington said. "Then you have to play your techniques, break on the ball correctly and catch it."

It's not just the position, however.

NU Career Interception Leaders

Player, Pos. (Years)	No.
Dana Stephenson, CB (1967-69)	14
Bret Clark, S (1982-84)	13
Ralph Brown, CB (1996-99)	11
Tyrone Byrd, FS (1989-92)	11
Larry Wachholtz, S (1964-66)	11
Tom Novak, LB (1946-49)	11

"You need to do your responsibility, be where you're supposed to be, in proper body position, so you can have the opportunity to react to the ball," he said. And finally, an interceptor has to have good enough hands to catch the ball.

"If we know they're going to throw the ball, Troy has as good of hands as there are in the secondary, and we'd certainly have him in the game," said Darlington. "Not that other guys can't catch the ball, but if a guy can catch, you don't want him sitting on the pines if you anticipate they're throwing."

Sports information office research indicates that at least three Cornhuskers had intercepted passes in three consecutive games: Kenny Wilhite (1991), Larry Wachholtz (1966) and Bob Decker (1951). Wachholtz also shares the Nebraska single-season record for pass interceptions, with seven in 1966. Dana Stephenson had seven interceptions in 1969, and Bill Kosch had seven in 1970.

Stephenson holds the Cornhusker career record with 14 interceptions from 1967 to 1969. ■

SOLICH GIVES HIS BLESSING TO PLAYERS-ONLY MEETING CALLED BY CAPTAINS

Regardless of how this Nebraska football season turns out, a players-only meeting near the end of the week before the Texas Tech game will have had a significant effect.

The captains called the meeting, which was conducted before practice.

"We decided we wanted to have a closed-doors, players-only meeting," said rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch, one of the captains. "A lot of things came out. We decided it was time to turn it up a notch. We really needed to come in with a Nebraska attitude, be a little bit mean, be a little more aggressive during the games and really make things happen. And the players responded really well."

Originally, the plan was for just the defensive players to meet. "But then we decided to go with the whole team, and a lot of good things came out of that meeting," Vanden Bosch said.

The meeting had Coach Frank Solich's blessing. It was proposed during the captains' weekly meeting with him. "There's no question that we hit a point in our schedule where we needed just to step back and take a look at where we were and where we're going. Sometimes that's good when it's coming from a coach, but I think there are times

when it's even better coming from a player," said Solich.

Even though the team was winning, "we really challenged ourselves to go out every day and practice like champions," Vanden Bosch said. "As captains, I don't know if we had seen the attitude we had at times last year, so we really wanted to come out and be a dominant team every weekend."

There's always a chance that some might take things said in such a meeting the wrong way.

"Players can take it several ways," said Vanden Bosch. "But we thought it was time to challenge the team, and they really responded well. We thought about what we needed to get done in the meeting, and we really focused in on everybody getting together and decided where we wanted to go."

Vanden Bosch described the meeting as a "gut-check."

Solich was pleased with its effect on the players.

"I think it did play out very well," he said. "I think it gets everybody back to reality as to what's got to get accomplished if we're going to be successful the way we want to be successful."

The Cornhuskers' remaining regular-season games will determine that. ■

MAJOR PROPS

The Nebraska sports information office received "major props" from nationally syndicated radio sports talk show host Jim Rome for making Coach Frank Solich available for an appearance in "the jungle" on a hectic Thursday afternoon for Solich prior to the Oklahoma game.

At one point during the program, Rome said it appeared Solich wouldn't be on.

"They worked hard to make that happen," he told his listeners. "That was very nice."

In addition to discussing the Sooners, Solich praised quarterback Eric Crouch, noting that given his ability as a runner, he might be a Heisman Trophy candidate even if he were a running back.

The previous night, Rome's guests on the Fox Sports cable television network's "Last Word" were former Cornhusker Coach Tom Osborne and former Sooner Coach Barry Switzer.

Their appearance was further evidence that both programs have "jungle karma."

SERIOUS BUSINESS

Nebraska hasn't had as many lopsided victories as usual this season, which means back-ups haven't gotten as much playing time. But they've tried to make the most of their opportunities.

They are as determined as they would be if the game's outcome were in doubt.

"We try to run the offense the best we can and try to get a touchdown," said sophomore I-back Dahrnan Diedrick, who has backed up Dan Alexander and Correll Buckhalter.

"We run basically the same type of offense. We all know our plays. We practice a lot, so it's not like the coaches say, 'OK, the younger guys are going in. We have to run the more basic plays.'"

The coaches don't simplify things just because the reserves are playing.

"We run the whole offense," Diedrick said. "No matter what the score is, we don't feel like we're mop-up players, fourth-quarter players, (that) we're going in just to run the clock out."

"We go in there and we're trying to get long drives and get touchdowns."

STRIVING FOR PERFECTION

The goal of any team is to play error-free.

"You're looking for the perfect game," said Nebraska Coach Frank Solich. "Generally, the perfect game is almost impossible to have, but we want to get it as close to that as we possibly can."

Rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch articulated that attitude following the Texas Tech game.

"I'm the type of player where I'm happy with my play, but I don't think I'll ever be satisfied," he said. "I'm always kind of critical of how I do on the field." ■



Dahrnan Diedrick

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?



Kyle Vanden Bosch

VANDEN BOSCH GETS ACADEMIC HONOR

Nebraska rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch was selected to receive one of 17 postgraduate scholarships from the National Football Foundation and College Football Hall of Fame.

A first-team Academic All-American in 1999, Vanden Bosch is just one of six Division I-A recipients, joining Drew Brees of Purdue, Scott Becker of Air Force, Jared Lee of BYU, Chris Weinke of Florida State and Josh Whitman of Illinois.

Vanden Bosch is the 18th Husker to earn this prestigious award, dating back to 1959. The selected student-athletes will receive an \$18,000 postgraduate scholarship and will be honored in New York City on Dec. 12.

UNPOPULAR PARITY

The NCAA's reduction in the number of scholarships available to football programs has led to parity, something at least some Nebraska fans could do without. But Nebraska fans aren't alone in that. Fans of most traditionally powerful programs probably feel the same way.

"They probably don't want to hear about it at Penn State," said Nebraska Coach Frank Solich.

"You start to name off the teams around the country, great traditional powers that are struggling with teams that not too long ago you'd probably be willing to say, 'Hey, it isn't going to happen. This team doesn't have a chance.' Well, now they have a chance."

"I think the players on the other team understand that. And the players on the team that supposedly is the favorite understand that. So you can't afford to have any letdowns."

Few teams make it through a season undefeated anyway, and that's getting even tougher because of parity. "It is very difficult to get through a year without a loss," Solich said.

"If you do, you're probably pretty thankful that you didn't have a great deal of injuries. You're pretty thankful about your schedule. That's usually how it works."

CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN

Coaches and players can't afford to be influenced by outside expectations.

"We talk to our players about how some fans will look at the game, how maybe some media will look at the game," Solich said. "They've really got to block that out."

"Their best bet is to just zero in on what they've got to get accomplished in the game and not get caught up in any kind of reaction as to how people from the outside are looking at this football team. That means writers and sports people here in this state and across the country."

"Really, the only people who can control how we play is us. I think it is important that you block everything out and you concentrate on football. Otherwise, you're not going to do your best."

BRIEFLY NOTED

— Nebraska's Christine Latham was named the Big 12 Player of the Year, after helping lead the Huskers to their third Big 12 regular season title. The sophomore forward from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, led the Big 12 in scoring with 47 points. She had 20 goals and seven assists on the year.

Joining Latham on the All-Big 12 first team were teammates Breanna Boyd, a sophomore from Calgary, Alberta, Canada; Jenny Benson, a senior from Huntington Beach, Calif.; and Meghan Anderson, a junior from Omaha.

— The Nebraska men's cross country team finished fifth, while the women was seventh at the Big 12 Cross Country Championships in Boulder, Colo.

The Husker men tallied 153 points to finish fifth, bettering last season's sixth-place showing. Nebraska was led by senior Marcus Witter's 11th-place finish. Witter completed the 8,000-meter course in 25:31, to capture his highest finish ever at the conference meet, narrowly missing out on all-conference honors given to the top nine finishers.

The Nebraska women were led by sophomore Kathryn Handrup, who finished 20th in a time of 21:43. ■

Paying His Dues

Highly touted I-back Collins stays upbeat despite lack of playing time



Mike BABCOCK

WHEN FOOTBALL RECRUITS visit Nebraska, they are shown the South Stadium varsity locker room. When they arrive, however, most are assigned lockers in aging Schulte Fieldhouse.

A few true freshmen are allowed to make the north-to-south move. But most must wait, some longer than a year. Being housed in the varsity locker room is a privilege not a right.

That's the accepted reality. A recruit, no matter how coveted, must pay his dues.

Thunder Collins has a locker in the South Stadium. He's a sophomore junior college transfer and didn't have to spend his first season at Nebraska in Schulte Fieldhouse.

Nevertheless, he is paying his dues in another way. Despite his much-discussed arrival in January, he has languished at the bottom of the depth chart at I-back this season.

He has been the last I-back listed, which means he was No. 6 until redshirted freshman Josh Davis was sidelined by an ACL injury, the week before the Baylor game.

That allowed Collins to move up to fifth, even though the next week's depth chart still listed Davis ahead of Collins and behind DeAntae Grixby, also a redshirted freshman.

The three names were joined by "or." But the order was significant. Collins is last.

Considering the amount of attention he received before first stepping on the practice field in August, Collins might be a little bitter about now. But if he is, he's done a good job of hiding it.

In fact, "languished" probably has an inappropriate connotation for describing Collins' situation. "I'm from L.A. That makes me strong," he said recently. "I've overcome bigger things than getting playing time. That isn't going to bother me right now. I'm just learning. I'm just chilling."

Collins is soft-spoken, with a ready smile and a unique perspective for someone about whom so much has been written and said — and for whom there were, and are, such great expectations.

"He's got a great attitude," said running backs coach Dave Gillespie. "He's one of those guys that has the maturity of understanding where he fits into the system at this point in time."

"Maybe he doesn't accept that, but he understands it."

Collins displayed that maturity last spring, after finding out he wouldn't be able to practice or attend meetings, like he thought he would, because of a mix-up in transfer credits. Instead, getting started on his playing career, his first exposure to Nebraska included getting up early each morning to work at Lincoln's Deeter Foundry, tossing manhole covers on trucks.

"Even though people said it was a mild winter, it was still cold waking up at 5 o'clock in the morning," Collins said. "When I was one of the (nation's) top recruits, I felt that I wouldn't have to do that anywhere else. But see, that was the dedication I had about coming to Nebraska."

His dedication was based in principle.

"A lot of people back home are angry that I made this move over here and I'm not playing right now," he said. "It's like, 'If you'd have stayed on the West Coast, at other schools, you'd have been starting.' But then again, that's the sacrifice I made. I'm tired of starting and losing. I'm tired of losing."

East Los Angeles Junior College was 3-7 his one season there, he said, and though his teams at Manual Arts High School may have had winning records, they didn't win enough.

His decision came down to Nebraska and Wisconsin, where Devery Hughes, a friend, is a sophomore cornerback. When Collins visited Wisconsin, "I mainly just chilled with

my boy and Ron Dayne," he said. Dayne, a New York Giants rookie running back, was last year's Heisman Trophy winner.

When he told Wisconsin he was going to Nebraska, "Coach (Barry) Alvarez was cool," said Collins. "He was like, 'If I'm going to lose you, I don't mind losing you to Frank (Solich).'"

Collins got advice about Nebraska from former Cornhuskers Rene Anderson and Paul Parker, who were assistant football coaches at Manual Arts High School while he was there.

They told him he would "be under a microscope. Everything you do, they're going to be on you for it. You can't blow up about things," he said. "If I get mad, I have to keep it to myself."

They also told him that people in Nebraska would be nice. And that's been the case.

"They're all nice," Collins said. "It's cool."

Collins was realistic about his chances of seeing significant action this season, particularly after missing spring practice. "I was anticipating playing my second year anyway," he said.

"I don't get mad because everybody sees that I can play. When they see me on the sideline, they won't be like, 'He sucks. He's on the sideline.' It's a matter of me just waiting."

Still, he admits having been frustrated because of not playing in some of the early home games.

"I was kind of down, but I didn't show it," he said.

The fans' response helped alleviate the frustration. "I've got fans coming up, giving me a hug, still giving me my props," he said.

"I haven't given them anything to be mad about."

But he has given them a lot to anticipate while he pays his dues. "It's OK," he said. "Now next year, if I'm not in the mix, then I'll kind of be wondering, unless I just don't show up."

"But I doubt that." ■



Thunder Collins had seven carries for 29 yards through the first eight games.



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Right In The Middle

*Burrow continues to learn
as backup to Polk*



**Bob
SCHALLER**

FORMER HUSKER LINEBACKER Jay Foreman was a great player.

Carlos Polk is already tagged as a first-round draft pick in the upcoming NFL draft.

And a lot of praise has been heaped on NU's current third-string middle linebacker Tony Tata.

There have been loads of talented middle linebackers through the years at Nebraska. Some have gone on to the NFL. Jon Hesse

has become a solid NFL special teams player for several teams, and was in Denver for one of the Broncos' two Super Bowl victories. And it looks like Foreman might finally get his chance in a year or two to be an every down player in pro football.

But what about 6-foot-1, 225-pound Jamie Burrow?

Burrow brings something the Husker coaches love: Consistency. He's never too up or too low. He's got field smarts that make him perfect for the hard-to-learn position. While he's not lightning fast, he certainly closes to the ball quickly. And the level at which he makes the correct read on a given play seems to place him ahead of where a normal back-up would be at this time in his career.

Middle linebacker is a key position for Nebraska's attack-style defense. While the outside linebackers can direct the flow of the play, the middle linebacker has to direct the defense — kind of that side of the ball's quarterback, if you will.

Burrow came up with the big defensive play when the Huskers were struggling against Missouri.

"It was good to see Jamie step up like that when we needed a play," NU defensive coordinator Craig Bohl said.

Mizzou closed the gap to 28-21 early in the third quarter, and followed that with a big defensive stand, taking over after a missed Nebraska field goal.

Missouri then took over and had momentum clearly on its side.

But on the other side of the ball, Burrow was ready to change the momentum.

As Kirk Farmer handed off to Zack Abron, Nebraska rush end Chris Kelsay shot into the middle, hitting Abron and jarring the ball loose.

"I was on a slant, and I got under (Abron)," Kelsay said. "But Jamie did the rest. I'm so proud of him."

Burrow picked up the ball, shook off big lineman A.J. Ricker, and then shoved aside Farmer to score a touchdown.

"I kind of leaned into the quarterback because I know there aren't a lot of quarterbacks in the Big 12 I could out-run," Burrow said. "I know Carlos (Polk) wouldn't ever let me live it down if the quarterback tackled me."

Burrow's touchdown helped the Huskers hold off Missouri's third-quarter rally, pushing Nebraska's lead to 35-21 with 8:08 left in the third quarter.

"I played behind the best middle linebacker in America," Burrow said. "But this week, Coach Bohl said he was going to get me more playing time. So, I just wanted to make the most of it."

Burrow is used to making good decisions. He is a perennial honor roll student with a 3.2 grade-point-average with a major in biology.

His football resume is solid, too. His father, Jimmy, lettered at Nebraska in 1974 and 1975 and played in the NFL and Canadian Football League before coaching at Washington State and Iowa State as an assistant.

Playing against his home-state Iowa State Cyclones also brought a special meaning a few weeks ago. And Burrow, as coaches like to say, knows something about "bringing it" himself.

Against ISU, Burrow had pre-game nerves for the first time in quite a while.

"In warmups, I had jitters, but I settled down," Burrow said. "It means a lot to me to have so many people here who care about me. These are people who knew me from elementary school on."

Burrow had two tackles, including one for a 1-yard loss against Iowa State.

Cut from the same mold of Phil Ellis in terms of size and speed, Burrow has a bigger role in line next year, without a doubt. He's also got several more games left where he can be mentored by one of Nebraska's best ever, Polk.

On top of that, Burrow will have experienced outside linebackers on either side of him next season, a luxury not afforded Polk this year, as Randy Stella and Scot Shanle developed into,

and learned, their new roles and responsibilities.

So there is still a lot of work to be done. The suddenly pass-happy Big 12 is presenting defensive coordinators around the conference with more challenges than ever. Those coordinators in turn must develop blitz schemes and coverage packages that keep those offenses guessing as much as the defense must guess. And it will mean that the middle linebacker position will only increase in both the number of reads the player must make, and how he must adjust to a given formation or set.

With his attitude, academics and athletic ability all on course, Burrow has something else in his favor: Time.

"Still time to learn," Burrow said, "and always room to improve."

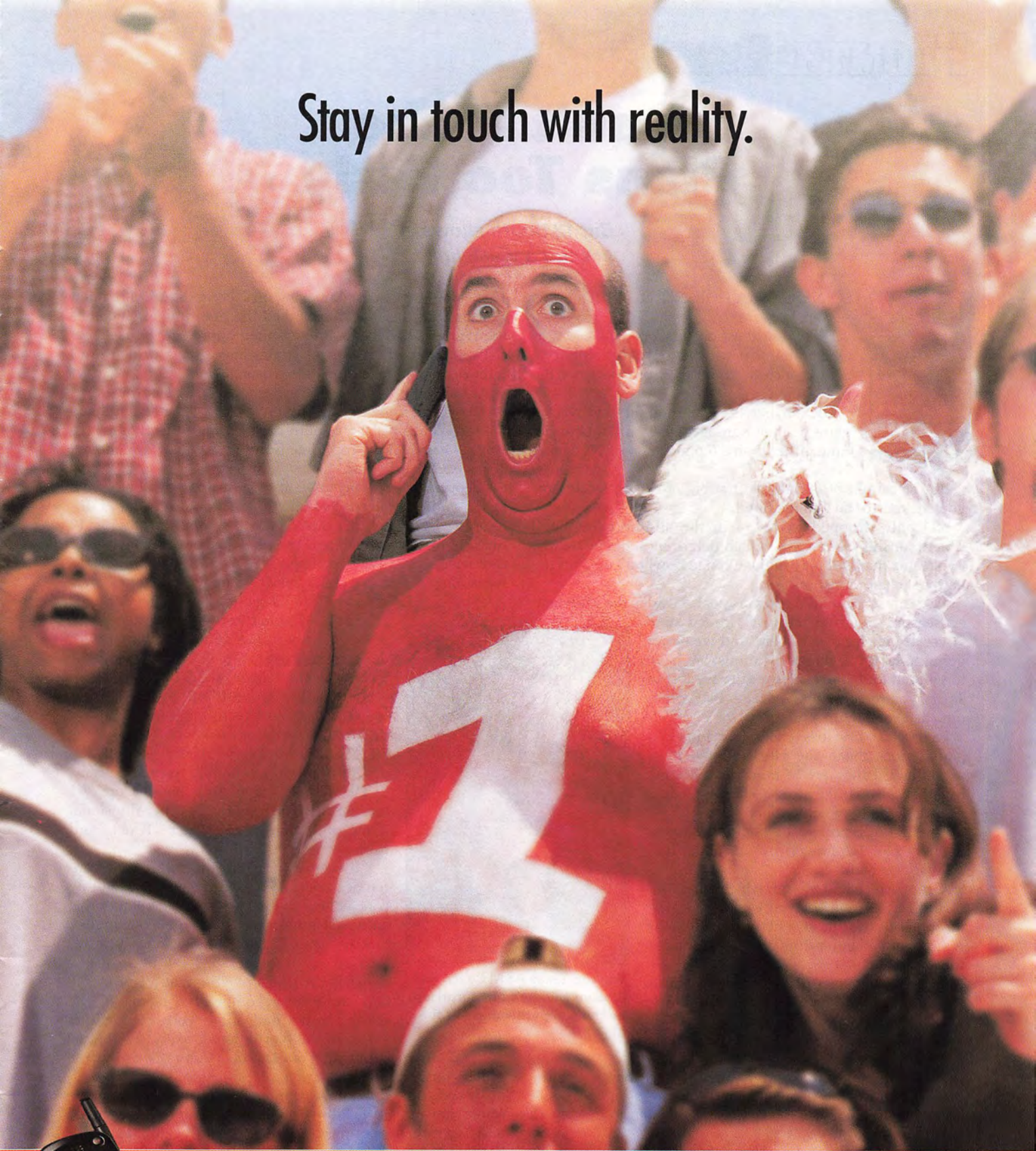
Spoken like a true leader. ■



**Jamie Burrow is in his
third season as a
reserve linebacker and
special teams player.**

Bob Schaller covers the Huskers for the North Platte Telegraph and Scottsbluff Star-Herald. He can be reached at schallerrc@aol.com.

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Don't Make Plans Too Early

Big 12 South shows it's not a weak link



Curt McKEEVER

SO NEBRASKA DOESN'T go unbeaten this season.

Following the Cornhuskers' 31-14 loss to Oklahoma, that was the only certainty one could conclude about their prospects for the rest of the year.

OK, so maybe you thought this week's game against Kansas State would rate prime time rather than a 6 p.m. slot on FOX Sports Net.

But be careful of taking the first big offer you receive for your tickets to the Orange Bowl.

NU only dropped to No. 4 in the all-important Bowl Championship Series poll, which determines, of course, the two teams that will play in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 3 for the national championship.

"We can still get all our teams goals besides the undefeated season," quarterback Eric Crouch said. "Everything else is still there, and we're not going to let those things die on us. We have to win out and, like last year after we lost to Texas, you're going to see a team that comes out each week with a mission."

Nebraska's first loss to Oklahoma in eight games does mean the Huskers will need some help if they are to make it to Miami. But they also could have a chance to help reduce the field of contenders.

The first BCS poll post-Oklahoma had the Sooners No. 1 followed by Virginia Tech and Florida State.

Virginia Tech and Miami, which was No. 5 in the BCS listing, played on Nov. 4. The loser all but fell out of contention, while the winner moved into prime position as long as it can win its final two games.

Florida State also played Clemson in an elimination game on Nov. 4, but still has to get past Florida next Saturday.

That leaves Oklahoma, which is at Texas A&M this week. A&M has won six straight games at home against nationally-ranked competition. If the Aggies don't make it seven in a row, Nebraska could still knock the Sooners out by winning a rematch in the Big 12 championship on Dec. 2.

Of course, we're getting way ahead of ourselves, aren't we?

"We do not want to speculate on other teams, we need to take care of our own business," NU Coach Frank Solich said. "We need to play hard and play well. (But) there is no question that the incentive is there."

After the Oklahoma loss, Nebraska was in line to play in at least five bowls — the Orange, Sugar, Fiesta, Cotton and Holiday.

Oct. 28 was a banner day for the South division of the Big

12. Besides Oklahoma knocking off Nebraska, A&M handed Kansas State a setback. It marked the first time in 60 games the Wildcats had lost to an unranked opponent.

That day typified the way things have gone during Big 12 inter-divisional matchups this season.

At the end of October, the top three teams from the North — Nebraska, Kansas State and Iowa State — had compiled a 5-4 record against their South division foes. But those three were 0-4 against the top three from the South — Oklahoma, Texas A&M and Texas.

"People always tend to want to sum up things before the fact. I said early in the year that there would be a lot of different twists and turns that would take place in the Big 12 race before it was over, and I think it's a credit to the league that we do have a very competitive league and from week to week that you don't really know what the outcomes are," A&M Coach R.C. Slocum said. "I can't say that I'm really surprised . . . I didn't know the particulars of who would be where, but I knew that with the competitiveness in this league and the balance of the league, we'd be like a lot of other leagues around the country. From week to week, you really can't tell."

Ah, but for those folks who consider the Big 12 still to be split by its divisional make-up, the South has definitely risen this year.

Oklahoma, A&M and Texas were 7-1 against the North, with one inter-divisional game remaining (between Texas and Kansas).

"It seems that since the start of the conference, everybody's always wanted to draw conclusions about the strength, whether this side's stronger or that side's stronger," Slocum said. "I felt all along on a year-to-year basis, on a week-to-week basis, it just depends on who's playing that week. We've had some very competitive teams in the South. We've had some very competitive teams in the North, and I really see that as being all of our league. I don't divide it up as

much North and South.

"If you wanted to look at it that way, we've had four years of playing and we've had two champions from the North zone and two from the South, so I think it's really been a very well-balanced league. And I think it still is this year."

Better get used to it. As Oklahoma's win over Nebraska punctuated, the days of a Big 12 team going unbeaten are getting tougher and tougher.

But that still doesn't mean there can't be big rewards at the end. ■



Veteran Texas A&M Coach R.C. Slocum said he's not surprised by the competitiveness of the Big 12.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

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He Takes a Licking

An option quarterback in high school, Crouch was prepared for the physical abuse to his body

By Mike Babcock

Eric Crouch learned his lesson as a red-shirted freshman in 1998. He trimmed his hip pads for aesthetic reasons and suffered a hip pointer that sidelined him for three games. He was the holder for place-kicks in two of those three games, but for all intents and purposes, he was out of action.

The third game was against Missouri. He hasn't missed since. "I feel like I'm a durable guy," Crouch said recently. "I take a lot of hits. But I get back up reasonably fast."

The speed isn't as important as the fact that he has always gotten up. The junior quarterback has been a key figure in the offense this season, and as he has gone, so have the

Cornhuskers.

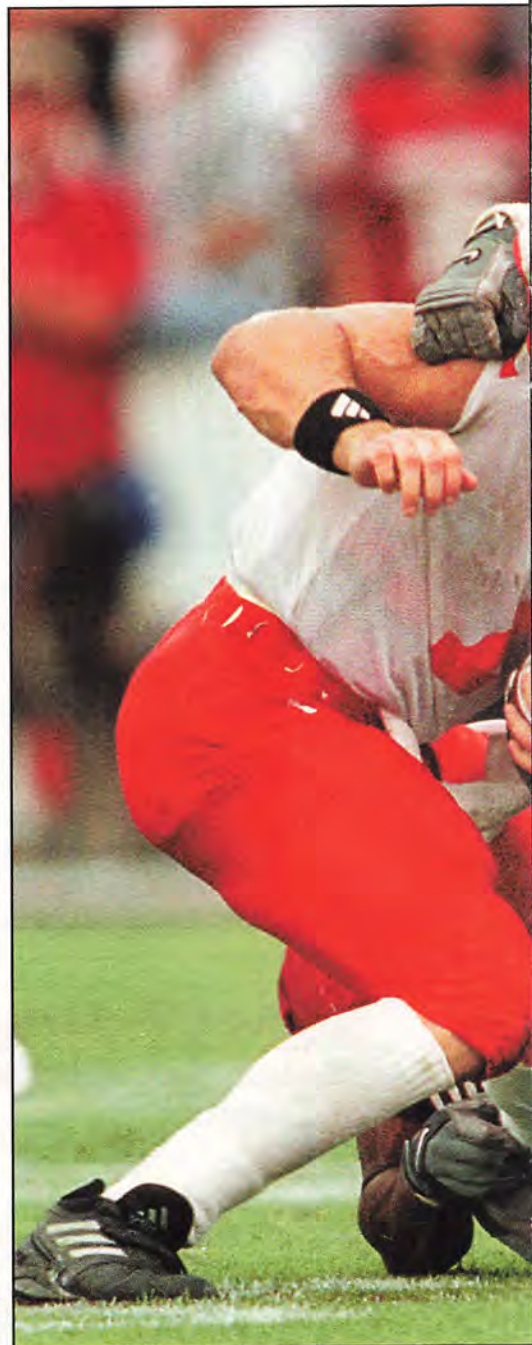
"He's a tough man," said middle linebacker Carlos Polk. "I always tease him that I want to hit him sometimes in practice to test him. But I know that's not going to happen."

"And I might not be able to catch him in the first place."

Crouch runs with an I-back's elusiveness and has averaged 5 yards per carry this season. "Some of the moves he puts on in a game leave you (going), 'Wow,'" said Polk.

Crouch has already earned a place among Nebraska's best quarterbacks, including Tommie Frazier, whom many regard as the standard by which all others should be measured.

The two were compared throughout the week of the Cornhuskers' 59-0 victory against Baylor, where



Scott Bruhn

Minor in Comparison

Eric Crouch was grabbed by the facemask during the Texas Tech game. But the officials didn't call a penalty, and "I didn't even think about it because it wasn't that bad," said Crouch.

The severity of a facemask penalty is relative now, anyway, as far as he's concerned.

After the much-publicized play involving Kansas State linebacker Travis Ochs in Nebraska's loss to the Wildcats at Manhattan in 1998, "any facemask penalty I get is going to be minor," Crouch said.

"It's going to be real minor." ■

Frazier is the running backs coach. Even Frank Solich was drawn into the discussion.

"They're both very composed individuals," he said. "And if you're going to put a guy at the quarterback spot, I don't think you can have a guy that doubts himself any."

"I don't think you can have a guy that if something goes wrong, all of a sudden he goes off the air and he's unsure of his ability, his teammates' ability, and points fingers. Both of those guys believe in themselves, and they got to the point where the players believed in them."

Crouch, like Frazier, is very team-



Nebraska quarterback Eric Crouch is hit high and low by Oklahoma's Michael Thompson (bottom) and Rocky Calmus at the end of an 18-yard run.

through.

"They've won national championships. They've bled and sweated on that field."

Crouch has bled and sweated, and played through the bumps and bruises that are inevitable with being a quarterback in an option-oriented offense. He takes a hit on just about every play, whether he hands off, pitches the ball, passes it or keeps it. And despite the pounding, he doesn't pace himself.

He goes full-bore, giving as good as he gets.

"It's kind of one of those things where you've just got to go, go, go until it runs out," he said. "Hopefully, I've got the tap hooked up to me where I'm not going to run out of gas."

"I just feel like I've got to go out there and play as hard as I can every down and not worry about the injury factor. That's when you get a little timid. And I don't want to feel that way."

"That's when you get hurt, when you're kind of holding up."

Crouch hasn't been timid, and he hasn't allowed relatively minor injuries to curtail him.

Among other things, he has been bothered by back problems as a result of landing on a sprinkler head in the end zone during the Iowa State game. But he has kept going.

Solich has held him out of practice when it appeared a day's rest would increase his chances of being closer to 100 percent healthy at game time. "Sometimes when your body's not feeling that great, it's not the smartest thing to go out there and make things worse," Crouch said.

But he has only grudgingly accepted the days off.

"I'd rather be out on the field," he said. "It's hard to watch practices because first of all, they go by real slow, and second of all, you're not getting anything done. All the blood's rushing to your feet."

Plus, when his back is hurting, "it stiffens up more standing there," he said.

A year ago, he played with a nag-

oriented, according to Solich. "Those two guys wanted the best for their football team, and they'll make any sacrifice to make it work," he said.

"Both of them have very, very strong arms. Both of them are very aggressive runners."

"Eric, of course, has more speed than what Tommie had. But Tommie had great ability to make you miss, so in that manner was able to make the big play. So when you look at them physically in terms of what they're able to get done, they're similar in a lot of ways."

In typical self-effacing fashion, Crouch, who came to Nebraska from

Omaha's Millard North High School two seasons after Frazier finished, downplays such comparisons.

"I think it's tough for anybody to make a comparison to Tommie Frazier," he said. "But just to be able to hear my name in the same sentence (with his) makes me proud enough to where I could live the rest of my life and not hear another comment of comparison about it and I'd be fine."

"You have to look up to him. I don't think there's any reason why you wouldn't. All the quarterbacks who have been here, you look up to those guys because they've made it

ging shoulder injury, which required surgery. But he never missed a practice or game. In retrospect, "if I would have maybe sat a practice out or two, I might have been even more ready during the game," he said. "So I'm trying to take that approach this year."

Crouch was prepared for the physical abuse to his body. He played quarterback in a similar offense in high school, as well as also playing defense until his junior season.

"So you have to have that mindset of toughness and durability," he said. "It's something I've acquired. It was-

n't a big shock for me (at Nebraska), but it was like another level up. You're taking more hits. The hits are harder. The speed is increased. And I find myself in the training room a little bit more than when I was in high school. It's like a running back in this system."

He has learned ways to diminish the effects of taking constant hits.

"I've been able to learn how to kind of shield my body," he said. "And when you're stood up by two or three guys, don't let five more come and hit you. Fall down."

Oh yes, he's also learned to not tamper with his hip pads. ■

Relationship with Coach Important to Crouch

Eric Crouch has a sense of his place in Nebraska football history.

"You always talk about the tradition that comes through this place," he said. "You always talk about playing for the guys that have played before you, that have kind of set the foundation."

Turner Gill, his position coach, is one of those players.

And "it really is nice," Crouch said. "I don't want to take for granted at all having Coach Gill as the quarterbacks coach. In the last two years it seems like the relationship between us has just gone to that next level that I know no matter what we say, we feel comfortable with each other."

A coach's ability to communicate with his players is indispensable to success, and establishing such communication "just takes time," said Crouch. "Right now it seems like it's at a high and it's just going to keep continuing to get better. That's one reason why I think I might be doing so well right now."

"It's a credit to Coach Gill and (his) being able to coach me the way he should."

Gill ranks with Tommie Frazier at the top of the quarterbacks who set the standard for the offense Nebraska now runs. Gill played in the early stages of its development.

As a result, "Coach Gill, he knows exactly what I'm going through," Crouch said. "To be right there on the sideline with me, too, is something that's just hard to talk about because it's so nice to have him there, talking to you through the whole game. He knows his stuff. He knows what it takes."

"He's been there. He knows mentally how to handle it."

Gill's presence on the sideline is evidence of the attraction of Nebraska's football tradition, according to Crouch. "He's not even from Nebraska, but he came back here," said Crouch.

That Gill, who is from Fort Worth, Texas, returned "shows his commitment to this program." ■

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A Special Place

Southeast corner of stadium brings back memories for Husker safety Watchorn

Troy Watchorn tapped his chest above his heart. He pointed toward the sky. He looked up at the wheelchair section in the southeast corner of Memorial Stadium. And he cried.

"I saw people in wheelchairs," he said. "I pictured my dad."

He also heard his mom's distinctive whistle before Nebraska's opener against San Jose State. When he was small, the whistle signaled supper. And when he heard it, he came running.

"The more times she whistled, the worse trouble you were getting into," he said.

Now the whistle brings comfort, attracting Watchorn's gaze to his mom. He knows where she is in the east stands. But the whistle is reassuring.

"She times it out pretty good, when it's kind of quiet," he said.

It was never quiet for the senior free safety not all that long ago. "I always felt like I had a headache," he said. "Every day I woke up, it was like something was on my mind."

"It felt weird. I was like, 'Well, it's just the stress of everyday life.'"

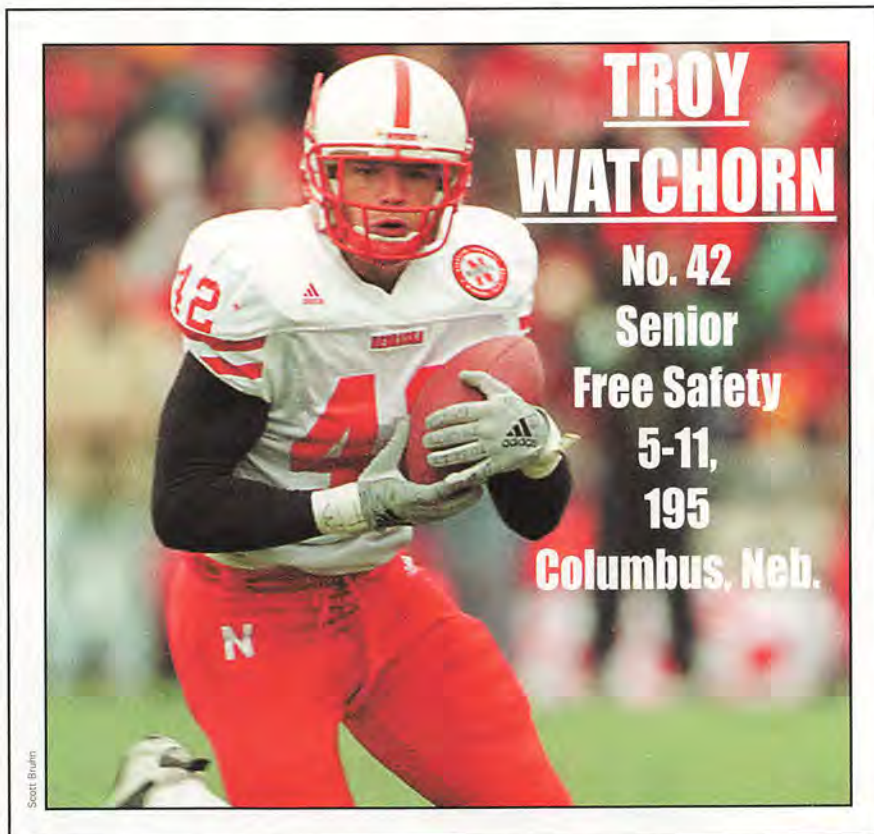
It was the stress of his everyday life. But it was hardly mundane. The week after Nebraska's 1997 opener against Akron, his dad, Keith, died of pancreatic cancer at age 44.

Troy shouldered that burden for the better part of three years.

Actually, he fought it, without the help his family offered. "A lot of people were there to help me," he said. "My mom always told me, 'You need to go talk to somebody.' But I never really listened to her. I was kind of stubborn about the whole situation. I said, 'I've got to deal with it myself.'"

In retrospect, "it was dumb for me, ignorance," he said. "I think most definitely it would have helped me to get all my frustrations out on someone else, and talk to them."

If not for his dad, Watchorn might not have walked on at Nebraska from Columbus, Neb., High School, or at least he wouldn't have walked on with the right attitude. "I thought I should have gotten a scholarship to come



here," he said. "I always thought I was good enough to play here."

His dad did, too, even if it meant walking on. "He just told me it was an honor to be asked to walk onto the best program in the nation. You just have to wait your turn, he told me, and go as hard as you possibly can. You can't ask anything but to give 100 percent while you're in there."

Because of the stress associated with his father's health, Watchorn didn't give 100 percent, even though he thought he was. "Now that I look back on it, I really wasn't," he said.

As a result, he languished on the scout team, with no prospect of fulfilling his father's dream, "to see one of his kids grow up to play Nebraska football," he said.

His metamorphosis was dramatic, and followed his releasing the burden of his father's death. "I finally decided to just let it go, just let all the frustration, the anger, the hate and everything inside me that built up my whole life out," said Watchorn, who has earned a Blackshirt this season.

"It was just calm all of a sudden. It's like a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders."

He considered quitting immediately

after his father's death, but didn't, in part, because he knew that wouldn't have been acceptable and he would have been letting down his father.

And after the Fiesta Bowl game against Tennessee, he committed himself to working hard and being a leader in his final season at Nebraska. "I could have very easily quit," he said. "Some people do. They become just everyday Joes and don't have, I guess, the mind-set or strength to keep going."

"I've got to thank God and my dad and my grandparents who passed on, people who love me to give me the strength to carry on. That's basically why I kept going."

Keith Watchorn attended the Akron game in 1997 to see his son play. He was propped up on a stretcher, in the southeast corner of the stadium. That's why the emotion is strongest when Troy Watchorn looks up there. Before the San Jose State game, "I actually started crying," he said.

"It's still emotional every time I come out and see my mom and everything like that."

He also sees his father, but with his heart rather than his eyes.

"I just think he's all smiles up in heaven," Troy said. ■

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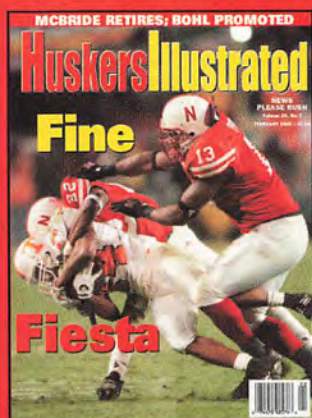
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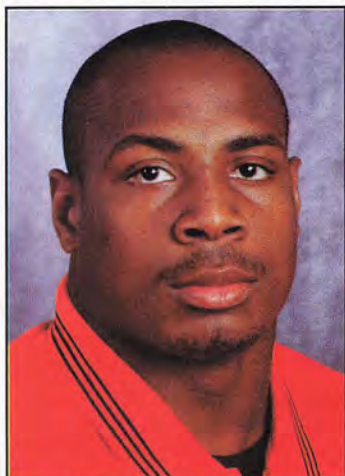
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Nebraska 56
Kansas 17

Eric Crouch rushed 13 times for 127 yards to take over the No. 1 spot on Nebraska's career rushing list for quarterbacks. He also scored four touchdowns.

Husker Player of the Game



Carlos Polk

Polk Happy to be Back at Full Speed

Carlos Polk wasted no time in setting the defensive tempo in Nebraska's 56-17 victory against Kansas. On the game's first play from scrimmage, the Cornhusker middle linebacker tackled Kansas quarterback Dylen Smith for a 3-yard loss.

"That was a tough play in space," said Nebraska defensive coordinator Craig Bohl. "I think that gave our defense a tremendous amount of confidence.

"That seemed to just springboard throughout the whole game."

Polk was credited with two more tackles for loss and six tackles total, to tie cornerback Keyuo Craver for the team lead. Five of Polk's tackles were unassisted.

"We did some special things to allow him to really free up," Bohl said.

Polk, who has been bothered by an ankle sprain suffered against Missouri, said the Kansas game was the first "in a long time my ankle's been 100 percent. So I was able to make cuts and be that step faster. I ran around good last week, too. But I just feel like today it was 100 percent.

"I didn't feel any nicks or kinks in it." ■

Ready

*Spirited midweek
scrimmage
between top units
helped Huskers
vent frustrations,
prepare for KU*

**By Mike Babcock
Photos by
Scott Bruhn**

During practice on the Wednesday before the Kansas game, Nebraska's top offensive and defensive units scrimmaged against each other for a dozen plays.

It was a little bit of a departure in the weekly routine. But "I think that was something we needed to do," said middle linebacker Carlos Polk. "We needed to put speed on speed."

The scrimmage was understandably spirited, and even though the defenders were supposed to hold up ball carriers instead of taking them down, "it was wild out there," Polk said.

"Everybody was looking to literally knock someone out. Offensive guys wanted to really knock us out, and we really wanted to knock the offense out. We were just wrapping up.

"But until that point, it was as live as could be."

The scrimmage enabled the Cornhuskers to vent their frustration following a 31-14 loss at Oklahoma the previous Saturday. "We were really trying to take it at each other," said Polk.

With that as preparation, they took it at hapless Kansas, winning 56-17.

The offense rolled up 562 yards,



to Rumble



Nebraska cornerback DeJuan Groce strips the football from Kansas receiver Harrison Hill. Teammate Erwin Swiney recovered at the NU 47 to set up the second touchdown late in the first quarter.

including 493 rushing. And the defense limited the Jayhawks to 266 total yards, 144 of which came in the fourth quarter, after the reserves got the call.

"I thought our defense really played with a great deal of energy," defensive coordinator Craig Bohl said. "It was probably as aggressive a performance, (watching) on the sideline, as what I've seen during the course of the fall. We're really pleased with the emotional level our guys came out with."

Nebraska's play on defense wasn't perfect by any means. But "hard play and aggression can sometimes cover up for a couple of mistakes," said Bohl. "I know we didn't maybe execute quite as well as what we wanted to, but I thought our energy level was at an all-time high level."

So, it appeared, was the energy level of the Cornhusker offense, which was short-circuited the previous week by Oklahoma. Nebraska scored on its first five possessions, a streak that ended not because of the Kansas defense but rather because time ran out in the first half.

The Cornhuskers lined up and ran over, around and through Kansas. Their first six plays were carries by I-back Dan Alexander, who had all 119 of his rushing yards by halftime.

"Our linemen were doing a great job up front," said Alexander, who averaged 7.9 yards per carry. "The holes were definitely there. That felt good for us to go out there and pound them."

Quarterback Eric Crouch and I-back Correll Buckhalter also reached 100 yards rushing before stepping aside for the reserves to play. Crouch was the game's leading rusher with 127 yards. He also scored four touchdowns and passed to tight end Tracey Wistrom for a fifth.

Crouch finished 3-for-3 passing, while redshirted freshman Jammal Lord was 4-for-5.

Though efficient, "we probably did not see enough of the throwing game to really tell whether we're going to be where we want or not," Coach Frank Solich said. "But on the other side of it, we had a good week of throwing in practice, so I think we're capable of playing a complete game."

Nebraska had little need to diversify its attack against the Jayhawks, who had difficulty keeping up. "Honestly, I don't even know what was going on," said Kansas defensive tackle Nate Dwyer.

"They just seemed to be one or



Dan Alexander gained 119 yards, his sixth 100-yard rushing game this season. The senior I-back leads Nebraska in rushing with 926 yards.

two steps ahead of us the whole game."

The Cornhuskers didn't try to finesse Kansas. "Our intent was to

definitely try to utilize our big running backs, who I thought ran very, very strong," Solich said. "I thought our line blocked well. I thought our

receivers blocked well. I thought that in general (we) just came off the ball well.

"Typically, that's the approach we try to take, is to try to run the football."

Nebraska led 49-3 by the end of the third quarter, after Lord directed a 10-play, 54-yard touchdown drive, which he finished off with a 5-yard run. Then Solich began substituting liberally.

The Cornhusker defense focused on making life miserable for Kansas quarterback Dylon Smith, who completed 14-of-29 passes for 129 yards, with one interception.

Nebraska sacked him three times, for losses totaling 18 yards.

Polk was a key element of the Cornhuskers' defensive success.

"He was always in the backfield. He was around the football a lot," said Bohl.

"We put him up in the line and allowed him to pressure. What he did do a lot of times was, if he wasn't in the backfield, he was using up another blocker to give them a great push.

"I thought he really played probably his best game all season."

Nebraska was able to set aside the loss to Oklahoma and concentrate on the business at-hand, unlike the year before when the Cornhuskers struggled to win at Kansas following a loss at Texas.

That they were ready to play seemed apparent to Solich leading up to the game.

"You could not stand around for a week of practice and expect to show up and play the kind of football that we needed to play, for a lot of reasons," he said.

Polk, a co-captain, had the same sense about the team's determination to bounce back.

"It was hard on all of us practicing on Monday, but we knew we couldn't just go out there and walk through things. We had to run around with excitement, even though we had lost," he said.

"We couldn't let that affect us in this game. You can't come out flat against a team like that because once they get momentum, it can be a totally different ball game."

The stage was set during the Wednesday scrimmage, ones against ones.

"Our offense, they busted some plays. We (the defense) made some plays. It just added a little more fuel to the fire," Polk said. "You saw guys ready to play." ■

4TH & 1 NCHES

Notes And Quotes From The Kansas Game

DIFFICULT TO REPLACE

Junior Jon Rutherford, who is capable of playing any interior position in Nebraska's offensive line, suffered an ACL injury, which will require surgery, according to Coach Frank Solich.

Rutherford was listed as the top back-up at both tackle positions and center.

"That is really a tough blow, certainly, for Jon and also a very tough blow for our football team," said Solich. "He's one lineman that you could feel very, very comfortable lining up at center, guard or tackle, knowing that he's going to do a great job for you."

Redshirted freshman Chris Loos was third at left tackle on the pre-Kansas depth chart. Junior Kyle Kollmorgen was third at right tackle. And sophomore Matt Shook was third at center.

"You don't replace a guy that's able to come in and give you what a starter gives you at any one of those positions, so that's a blow to us," Solich said of Rutherford's injury.

"We have some young players that will need to step up and fill the void. But the problem is, you're talking about not just one player needing to do it (step up)."

Other than Rutherford's injury, "I think we came out of it fairly decently," said Solich.

Defensive tackle Jeremy Slechta and offensive guard Toniou Fonoti both played with casts on broken right hands, suffered in the Oklahoma game. Despite the cast, Slechta intercepted a pass in the third quarter and returned it 10 yards, to give Nebraska possession at its own 46-yard line.

Slechta, a junior from LaVista, Neb., was the first Cornhusker defensive tackle to intercept a pass since Jason Wiltz picked off one against Washington in 1998.

SUSPENDED

Junior Randy Stella, Nebraska's starting weakside linebacker all season, was suspended and watched the game from the sideline, in street clothes. Solich would not say specifically what led to the one-game suspension. "Team policy was the problem, (not) complying with it," he said.

Junior Mark Vedral started in Stella's place. The start was Vedral's first.

LOMBARDI FINALIST

Dominic Raiola, Nebraska's junior center, was named one of four finalists for the Lombardi Award, presented annually by the Rotary Club of Houston, on the day of the Kansas game.

The other finalists were Michigan offensive guard Steve Hutchinson, Minnesota center Ben Hamilton and Florida State defensive end Jamal Reynolds. All three are seniors.

The award will be presented in Houston on Dec. 6.

Nebraska has had four Lombardi Award winners: rush end Grant Wistrom (1997), offensive guard Dean Steinkuhler (1983), center Dave Rimington (1982) and middle guard Rich Glover (1972).

Raiola was named as the ABC/Chevrolet Nebraska player of the game against Kansas.

"We know it starts up front," Raiola said of Nebraska's play against the Jayhawks.

"If we're not going to get it done up front, it's not going to happen. Our backs are to the wall now, and all we can do is come out and keep punching at people and pushing them around."

ATOP THE LIST

Eric Crouch led the Cornhuskers in rushing, carrying 13 times for 127 yards and four touchdowns. The yardage pushed Crouch ahead of Steve Taylor (1985-88) into the No. 1 spot on Nebraska's career rushing list for quarterbacks. Crouch has 2,152 career rushing yards. Taylor had 2,125.

The four rushing touchdowns gave Crouch 37, also a school career record for a quarterback, and they tied the school record for touchdowns by a quarterback in a game. Gerry Gdowski (1989, Iowa State), Mickey Joseph (1990, Missouri) and Scott Frost (1997, Missouri) were the others.

Crouch moved ahead of Taylor into fourth place on Nebraska's career total offense list. He is 531 yards behind Tommie Frazier, who holds the record with 5,476 total yards.

TRIPLE THREAT TROUBLE

Crouch (127) and I-backs Dan Alexander (119) and Correll Buckhalter (100) all rushed for 100 yards against Kansas. That has happened only one other time in Cornhusker history.

Ken Clark, Terry Rodgers and Steve Taylor did it against Arizona State in 1988. ■

2000 Schedule

(Team's current record)

1	Sept. 2	San Jose State (7-3), W 49-13
2	Sept. 9	at Notre Dame (6-2), W 27-24
3	Sept. 23	Iowa (2-8), W 42-13
4	Sept. 30	Missouri (2-7), W 42-24
5	Oct. 7	at Iowa State (6-3), W 49-27
6	Oct. 14	at Texas Tech (6-4), W 56-3
7	Oct. 21	Baylor (2-7), W 59-0
8	Oct. 28	at Oklahoma (8-0), L 31-14
9	Nov. 4	Kansas (4-5), W 56-17
10	Nov. 11	at Kansas State (8-2), 6 p.m., Fox Sports Net
11	Nov. 24	Colorado (3-6), 11 a.m., ABC
	Dec. 2	Big 12 Championship at Kansas City, ABC

Big 12 Standings

	North		All	
	Conf.			
Nebraska	5	1	8	1
Kansas State	4	2	8	2
Iowa State	3	3	6	3
Colorado	3	3	3	6
Kansas	2	4	4	5
Missouri	1	5	2	7

	South		All	
	Conf.			
Oklahoma	5	0	8	0
Texas	5	1	7	2
Texas A&M	5	1	7	2
Texas Tech	2	4	6	4
Oklahoma State	0	5	2	6
Baylor	0	6	2	7

Nov. 4 results

Nebraska 56, Kansas 17
 Kansas State 56, Iowa State 10
 Oklahoma 56, Baylor 7
 Colorado 28, Missouri 18
 Texas 29, Texas Tech 17
 Texas A&M 21, Oklahoma State 16

Nonconference opponents

Iowa 26, Penn State 23 (2 overtimes)
 San Jose State 27, TCU 24
 Notre Dame idle

Upcoming Opponents' Schedules

Kansas State (8-2)

Aug. 25 Iowa, W 27-7
 Sept. 2 Louisiana Tech, W 54-10
 Sept. 16 Ball State, W 76-0
 Sept. 23 North Texas, W 55-10
 Sept. 30 at Colorado, W 44-21
 Oct. 7 at Kansas, W 52-13
 Oct. 14 Oklahoma, L 41-31
 Oct. 21 Texas Tech, W 28-23
 Oct. 28 at Texas A&M, L 26-10
 Nov. 4 Iowa State, W 56-10
 Nov. 11 Nebraska
 Nov. 18 at Missouri

Colorado (3-6)

Colorado State, L 28-24
 at Southern Cal, L 17-14
 Sept. 9 Washington, L 17-14
 Sept. 16 Kansas State, L 44-21
 Sept. 30 at Texas A&M, W 26-19
 Oct. 7 Texas, L 28-14
 Oct. 14 at Kansas, L 23-15
 Oct. 21 Oklahoma State, W 37-21
 Oct. 28 at Missouri, W 28-18
 Nov. 4 Iowa State
 Nov. 11 at Nebraska

Game 10

At Kansas State

Nov. 11

Location: Manhattan, Kan.

Enrollment: 21,543

1999 record: 11-1

Coach: Bill Snyder, 12th year

Series: Nebraska leads 71-11-2

6 p.m. (Fox Sports Net),
 KSU Stadium, Manhattan, Kan.



Wildcat to Watch

Defensive tackle Mario Fatafehi hasn't suffered from any sort of slump after being selected as the Big 12 Defensive Newcomer of the Year in 1999.

The senior from Snow (Utah)



Junior College has followed up his impressive Division-I debut with 55 tackles (including 14 for losses) and 8.5 sacks through nine games this season. The 6-2,

305-pound Honolulu, Hawaii native played his best game of the season against Ball State, amassing six tackles and three sacks.

Fatafehi's speed off the snap and physical strength are big reasons why K-State leads the Big 12 in rushing defense (84.2 yards per game).

Quick Facts

Senior wide receiver Quincy Morgan is a good barometer for how the Wildcats will perform. K-State is 14-1 when Morgan catches at least one touchdown pass. Through 10 games, the 6-2, 215-pound receiver has 47 catches for 875 yards, which leads the Big 12.

Quarterback Jonathan Beasley is second in the nation in the NCAA's newly-created "Points Responsible For" statistic with 182 points.

On Deck

Colorado Nov. 24

Location: Boulder, Colo.

Enrollment: 25,656

1999 record: 7-5

Coach: Gary Barnett, 2nd year

Series: Nebraska leads 42-14-2

11 a.m. (ABC)
 Memorial Stadium, Lincoln, Neb.



Tentative 2 Deeps

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

SE	3	Matt Davison***	6-1	185	Sr.
	9	Wilson Thomas*	6-5	205	So.
LT	58	Dave Volk**	6-5	290	Jr.
	76	Chris Loos	6-3	310	Fr.
LG	77	Toni Fonoti*	6-4	335	So.
	59	Wes Cody	6-2	300	So.
C	54	Dominic Raiola**	6-2	300	Jr.
	53	Matt Shook	6-2	290	So.
RG	55	Russ Hochstein***	6-4	290	Sr.
	50	Jon Dawson	6-2	280	Fr.
RT	65	Jason Schwab**	6-1	305	Sr.
	75	Kyle Kollmorgen**	6-5	305	Jr.
TE	87	Tracey Wistrom**	6-5	230	Jr.
	99	Aaron Golliday*	6-4	285	So.
QB	7	Eric Crouch**	6-1	200	Jr.
	10	Jammal Lord	6-2	210	Fr.
FB	15	Willie Miller***	6-1	245	Sr.
	4	Judd Davies	6-0	240	Fr.
IB	38	Dan Alexander***	6-0	245	Sr.
and	36	Correll Buckhalter***	6-0	225	Sr.
WB	12	Bobby Newcombe***	6-0	200	Sr.
	8	John Gibson**	6-0	195	Sr.
PK	26	Josh Brown*	6-2	190	So.

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

LR	57	Chris Kelsay*	6-5	255	So.
or	98	Demoine Adams*	6-2	235	So.
NT	70	Jason Lohr*	6-2	275	Jr.
	55	Jon Clanton*	6-2	275	So.
DT	91	Loran Kaiser***	6-4	290	Sr.
or	56	Jeremy Slechta*	6-6	285	Jr.
RR	83	Kyle Vanden Bosch***	6-4	260	Sr.
	95	J.P. Wichmann*	6-4	230	Jr.
SLB	43	Scott Shanle*	6-2	230	So.
	40	T.J. Hollowell	6-0	215	Fr.
MLB	13	Carlos Polk***	6-2	260	Sr.
	48	Jamie Burrow*	6-1	225	Jr.
WLB	34	Randy Stella*	6-0	200	Jr.
	9	Mark Vedral**	6-1	205	Jr.
LCB	3	Keyuo Craver**	5-10	190	Jr.
	28	Pat Ricketts	5-11	180	Fr.
FS	14	Dion Booker**	6-1	205	Jr.
or	42	Troy Watchorn**	5-11	195	Sr.
ROV	25	Joe Walker***	5-10	205	Sr.
or	19	Clint Finley**	6-0	205	Sr.
RCB	16	Erwin Swiney**	6-0	185	Jr.
or	5	DeJuan Groce*	5-10	190	So.
P	17	Dan Hadenfeldt*	5-11	195	Sr.

KANSAS STATE OFFENSE

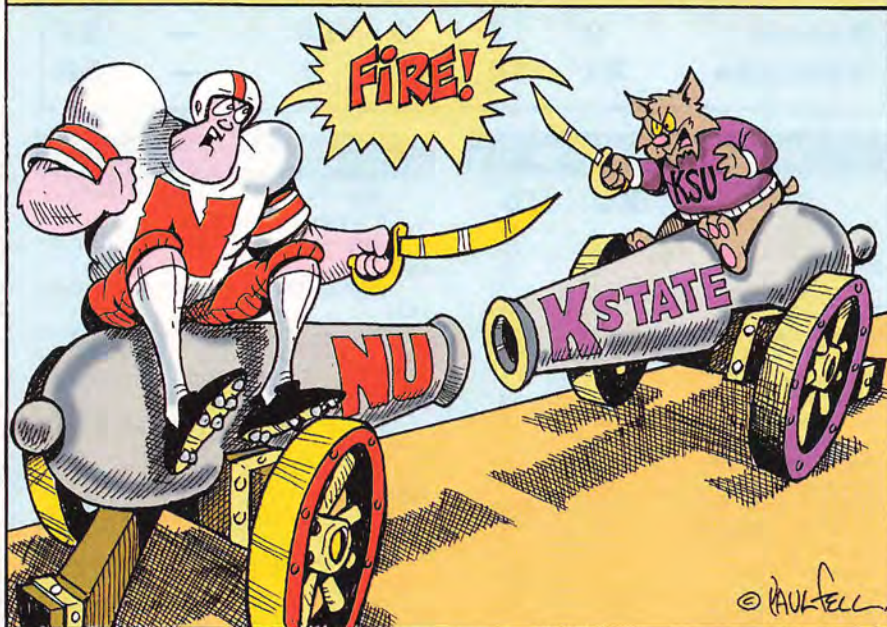
WR	5	Quincy Morgan*	6-2	215	Sr.
	45	Brandon Clark*	6-3	220	Jr.
LT	74	Milf. Stephenson***	6-2	275	Sr.
	69	Matt Martin	6-5	270	Jr.
LG	64	Andy Eby*	6-3	280	Jr.
	78	Steve Washington*	6-4	315	So.
C	58	Randall Cummins**	6-3	285	Jr.
	59	Dan Divilbiss	6-1	270	Jr.
RG	70	John Robertson*	6-4	280	Jr.
	53	Nick Leckey	6-4	285	Fr.
RT	65	Thomas Barnett**	6-5	290	Jr.
	76	Oshin Honarchian*	6-5	290	Fr.
TE	85	Shad Meier***	6-5	250	Sr.
	81	Nick Warren**	6-7	255	Jr.
QB	18	Jonathan Baszley***	6-1	215	Sr.
	3	Ell Roberson	6-0	190	Fr.
RB	1	Josh Scobey	6-0	205	Jr.
or	32	David Allen***	5-9	200	Sr.
FB	37	Johnno Lazetich*	6-1	240	Sr.
or	25	Roderick Cartwright	5-8	242	Jr.
WR	22	Aaron Lockett**	5-7	160	Jr.
	33	Bruce Libel***	5-10	170	Sr.
PK	15	Jamie Rheem***	6-2	190	Sr.

KANSAS STATE DEFENSE

DE	44	Monty Beisel***	6-3	255	Sr.
	98	Andrew Shull	6-5	240	Fr.
DT	75	Mario Fatafehi*	6-2	305	Sr.
	79	Cliff Holloman*	6-4	275	Sr.
NT	55	DeVane Robinson**	6-1	285	Jr.
	96	Jerry Togial	6-4	295	Jr.
DE	36	Chris Johnson***	6-1	265	Sr.
	97	Melvin Williams*	6-4	255	So.
LB	52	Ben Leber**	6-3	250	Jr.
	51	Andy Klocke*	6-2	220	So.
LB	41	Turelle Williams***	6-0	240	Sr.
	56	Terry Pierce	6-3	250	Fr.
LB	54	Jason Kazar**	6-0	220	Sr.
or	50	Warren Lott	6-3	230	Sr.
CB	23	Jerametrius Butler**	5-10	180	Jr.
	2	DeRon Tyler*	5-8	170	Jr.
FS	38	Jon McGraw**	6-3	200	Jr.
	12	Derrick Yates	6-2	185	Jr.
SS	40	Jarrod Cooper***	6-1	210	Sr.
	14	Milton Proctor**	6-0	200	Jr.
CB	35	Dyshod Carter***	5-10	185	Sr.
	4	Terence Newman*	5-11	170	So.
P	10	Travis Brown*	6-5	215	So.

THE PAUL FELL PREDICTION

NEBRASKA vs. KANSAS STATE



NOV. 11, 2000

HUSKERS AND WILDCATS BRING OUT HEAVY ARTILLERY IN CRUCIAL BIG 12 NORTHERN DIVISION MATCHUP!

PICKS

NEBRASKA AT KANSAS STATE

Brian Hill
Editor

Two years ago, when K-State won in Manhattan, the Wildcats had a special quarterback in Michael Bishop. This game has a new twist. Nebraska has the special quarterback — Eric Crouch. **Nebraska 27, Kansas State 23**

Mike Babcock
Contributing Editor

This looked like a game to determine the Big 12 North Division, with national championship implications and much more. Now, it's a 6 p.m. game on Fox Sports Net. You never know. Still the Wildcats could pose a formidable challenge at home. And they could salvage some measure of satisfaction with a victory, certainly. So it won't be easy. **Nebraska 34, Kansas State 28**

Bob Schaller
Contributing Writer

Kansas State has too much on the line to come up lame. But this is the defining game of the Frank Solich era, at least for now. This is a crucial fork in the road for Nebraska. Is it a top-10 team, or are the Huskers among the best in the land? This game tells the tale. **Nebraska 31, Kansas State 27**

Terry Douglass
Grand Island (Neb.)
Independent Sports Editor

Nebraska returns to the scene of the crime where Eric Crouch nearly lost his head and the Cornhuskers lost the game to Kansas State in 1998. The Wildcats had superior talent that day, but that won't be the case this time . . . **Nebraska 35, Kansas State 21**

BY THE NUMBERS

Kansas vs. Nebraska Nov. 4, 2000 • Lincoln, Neb.

Score By Quarters

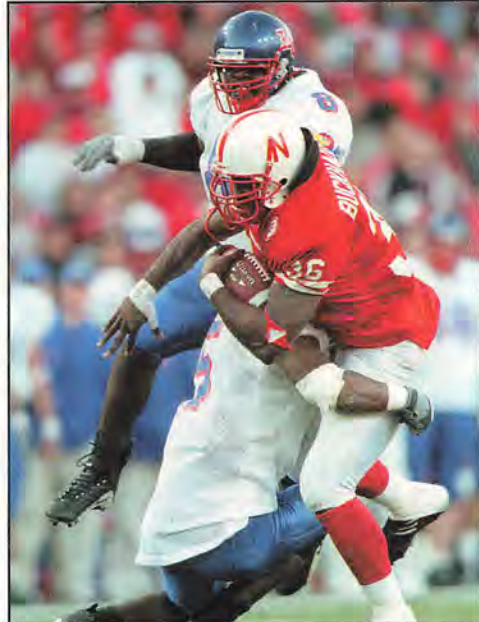
Kansas	0	3	0	14	—	17
Nebraska	21	14	14	7	—	56

Team Stats

	KU	NU
First Downs	17	31
Rushing	8	26
Passing	8	3
Penalty	1	2
Rushing Attempts	29	73
Yards Gained Rushing	133	507
Yards Lost Rushing	36	14
Net Yards Rushing	97	493
Net Yards Passing	165	69
Passes Attempted	31	8
Passes Completed	16	7
Had Intercepted	1	0
Total Plays	60	81
Total Net Yards	266	562
Avg. Gain Per Play	4.4	6.9
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	5-2
Penalties-Yards	5-49	3-29
Punts-Yards	6-225	0-0
Avg. Per Punt	37.5	43.0
Punt Returns-Yards	0-0	4-47
Interceptions-Yards	0-0	1-10
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	1-6
Kickoff Returns-Yards	7-129	2-31
Possession Time	26:06	33:54

Scoring

NU — Eric Crouch 1-yard run (Josh Brown kick)
NU — Crouch 1-yard run (Brown kick)
NU — Crouch 3-yard run (Brown kick)
KU — Joe Garcia 45-yard field goal
NU — Tracey Wistrom 3-yard pass from Crouch (Brown kick)
NU — Crouch 1-yard run (Brown kick)
NU — Correll Buckhalter 4-yard run (Brown kick)
NU — Jammal Lord 5-yard run (Brown kick)
KU — Dylon Smith 6-yard run (Garcia kick)
NU — Judd Davies 3-yard run (Brown kick)
KU — Reggie Duncan 2-yard run (Garcia kick)
Att. — 78,096
Temp. — 62



Correll Buckhalter carried 16 times for 100 yards to give the Huskers three backs with 100 or more yards.

Individual Leaders

KANSAS

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Duncan, R.	11	96	8.7	34	1
Dyer, Z.	1	7	7.0	7	0
Coke, D.	1	0	0.0	0	0
Smith, D.	10	-1	-0.1	16	1
Winbush, D.	6	-5	-0.8	2	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Smith, D.	14-29-1	48.3	129	0
Dyer, Z.	2-2-0	100.0	40	0

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Hill, H.	6	63	10.5	21	0
Thompson, J.T.	3	70	23.3	30	0
Ross, R.	2	18	9.0	9	0
Winbush, D.	2	4	2.0	3	0
Jones, A.	1	10	10.0	10	0
Duncan, R.	1	2	2.0	2	0
Fulton, T.	1	2	2.0	2	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Pelfanio, J.	6	225	37.5	46

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Ross, R.	4	60	15.0	21	0
Nesmith, C.	2	44	22.0	25	0
Mills, D.	1	25	25.0	25	0

DEFENSIVE LEADERS

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Nesmith, C.	6	13	19	0	0	0
Rogers, M.	5	8	13	0	0	0
High, K.	6	8	14	2-3	0	0
Davison, A.	6	3	8	0	0	0
Murphy, C.	2	6	8	1-2	0	0
Bullock, V.	2	5	7	0	0	0
Bowers, T.	4	2	6	2-5	0	0
Roe, Q.	2	2	4	0	0	0
Hayes, M.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Benford, D.	0	3	3	1-2	0	0
Owen, M.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Letourneau, J.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Dwyer, N.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Holloman, E.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Atkinson, G.	0	2	2	0	0	0
Robinson, A.	0	2	2	0	0	0
Cook, B.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Jordan, M.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Whitfield, D.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Ivey, C.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Wier, B.	0	1	1	0	0	0

NEBRASKA

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Crouch, E.	13	127	9.8	47	4
Alexander, D.	15	119	7.9	23	0
Buckhalter, C.	16	100	6.3	20	1
Collins, T.	6	48	8.0	17	0
Diedrick, D.	8	33	4.1	12	0
Lord, J.	6	27	4.5	11	1
Davies, J.	4	24	6.0	13	1
Miller, W.	2	10	5.0	6	0
Miller, R.	1	5	5.0	5	0
Albertson, M.	1	3	3.0	3	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Crouch, E.	3-3-0	100.0	15	1
Lord, J.	4-5-0	80.0	54	0

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Davies, J.	1	27	27.0	27	0
Newcombe, B.	1	17	17.0	17	0
Diedrick, D.	1	12	12.0	12	0
Thomas, W.	1	8	8.0	8	0
Gibson, J.	1	7	7.0	7	0
Wistrom, T.	1	3	3.0	3	1
Buckhalter, C.	1	-5	-5.0	0	0

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Newcombe, B.	2	40	20.0	24	0
Walker, J.	1	8	8.0	8	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Walker, J.	1	24	24.0	24	0

DEFENSIVE LEADERS

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Polk, C.	5	1	6	3-9	0	0
Craver, K.	5	1	6	0	0	0
Ricketts, P.	2	3	5	0	0	0
Groce, D.	3	1	4	0	0	0
Vedral, M.	2	2	4	1-3	0	0
Booker, D.	2	2	4	0	0	0
Shanley, S.	2	1	3	1-4	0	1-4
Kelsay, C.	1	2	3	0	0	0
Vanden Bosch, K.	1	1	2	1-10	0	1-10
Wichmann, J.P.	2	0	2	1-4	0	1-4
Hollowell, T.J.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Burrow, J.	0	2	2	0	0	0
Smith, J.	0	2	2	1-1	0	0
Thomas, B.	1	0	1	1-5	0	0
Lohr, J.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Kaiser, L.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Finley, C.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Walker, J.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Swiney, E.	1	0	1	0	0	0

SEASON STATS

RUSHING LEADERS

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPG	TD
Alexander, D.	9	148	926	102.9	6
Crouch, E.	9	132	804	89.3	16
Buckhalter, C.	9	94	670	74.4	7
Diedrick, D.	9	33	212	23.6	3
Miller, W.	9	37	203	22.6	2
Davies, J.	9	17	183	20.3	1
Lord, J.	6	28	130	21.7	4
Collins, T.	3	13	77	25.7	0
Grixby, D.	9	10	61	6.8	0
Kastl, P.	6	6	26	4.3	0
Miller, R.	4	5	23	6.8	0
Newcombe, B.	9	9	18	2.0	0

PASSING

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Crouch, E.	9	62-126-6	49.2	923	11
Lord, J.	6	9-16-1	56.2	116	0

RECEIVING LEADERS

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	YPG	TD
Davison, M.	9	17	332	19.5	36.9	3
Wistrom, T.	9	17	273	16.1	30.3	3
Newcombe, B.	9	17	219	12.9	24.3	0
Gibson, J.	9	5	21	4.2	2.3	1
Buckhalter, C.	9	4	63	15.8	7.0	1
Davies, J.	9	3	49	16.3	5.4	0
Bowling, J.	9	3	38	12.7	4.2	1
Alexander, D.	9	2	17	8.5	1.9	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Brown, J.	9	6	3	40

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Hadenfeldt, D.	30	1347	44.9	62
Brown, J.	1	28	28.0	28

DEFENSIVE LEADERS

Name	G	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	S/Yds.
Polk, C.	9	27	37	64	7-24	0	1-10
Stella, R.	8	26	19	45	9-24	0	4-5-19
Craver, K.	9	26	17	43	5-17	0	2-12
Vanden Bosch, K.	9	19	17	36	12-62	0	5-37
Shanley, S.	9	19	16	35	3-6	1-18	1-4
Booker, D.	9	18	16	34	2-10	0	0
Lohr, J.	9	14	17	31	4-13	0	2-10
Walker, J.	9	17	12	29	2-2	2-24	0
Slechta, J.	9	9	14	23	3-12	1-10	1-7
Kelsay, C.	9	7	14	21	2-5	0	0.5-4
Groce, D.	9	17	4	21	1-6	1-0	0
Vedral, M.	7	12	8	20	4-7	0	0

TEAM STATISTICS

Total Offensive Yards	4,385	2,712				
Plays	685	575				
Average Per Play	6.4	4.7				
Average Per Game	487.2	301.3				
Net Rushing Yards	3,346	909				
Attempts	543	259				
TDs Rushing	39	8				
Net Passing Yards	1,039	1,803				
Completions	71	142				
Average Per Pass	7.3	5.7				
Average Per Catch	14.6	12.7				
Average Per Game	115.4	200.3				
TDs Passing	11	7				
Sacks By-Yards	20-118	10-75				
Fumbles-Lost	18-5	12-4				
Penalties-Yards	55-477	67-526				
Scoring	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	TOT
NU	122	111	71	84	6	394
Opponents	27	54	40	28	3	152

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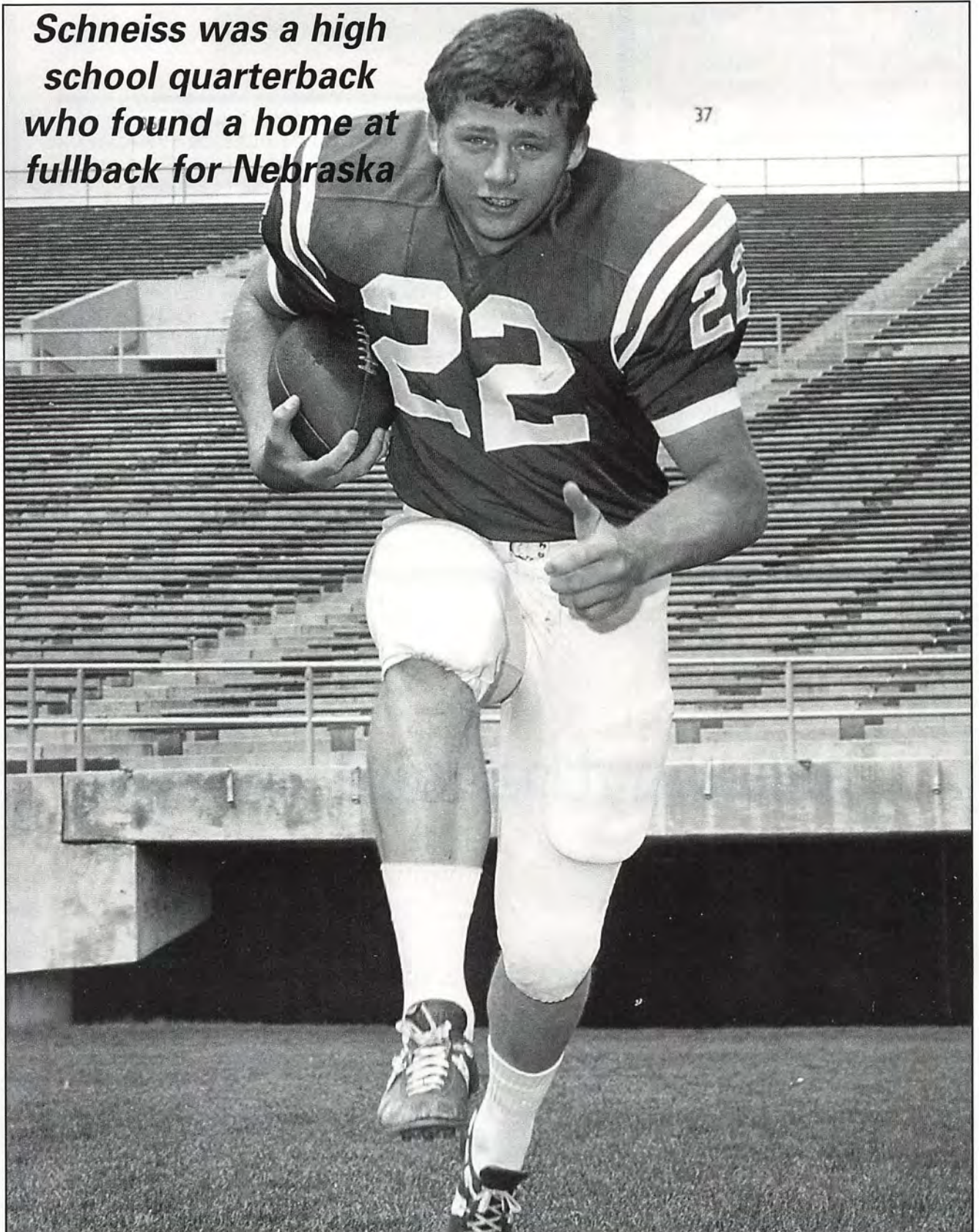


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A Good Fit

Schneiss was a high school quarterback who found a home at fullback for Nebraska

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Game 9 Nebraska 54, Iowa State 29

Nov. 7, 1970
Clyde Williams Field, Ames, Iowa

	Score	Time
(First Quarter)		
NU — Joe Orduna, 3-yd run (kick blocked)	6-0	7:52
NU — Orduna, 8-yd run (pass failed)	12-0	1:33
(Second Quarter)		
ISU — Reggie Shoemake, 39-yd field goal	12-3	9:38
NU — Jerry Tagge, 1-yd run (Paul Rogers kick)	19-3	6:08
NU — Dan Schneiss, 7-yd pass from Tagge (Rogers kick)	26-3	1:52
ISU — Otto Stowe, 33-yd pass from Dean Carlson (Stowe run)	26-11	:47
(Third Quarter)		
NU — Johnny Rodgers, 22-yd pass from Tagge (Rogers kick)	33-11	4:33
ISU — Jock Johnson, 20-yd pass from Carlson (pass failed)	33-17	4:04
NU — Orduna, 6-yd run (Rogers kick)	40-17	3:07
NU — Schneiss, 23-yd run (Rogers kick)	47-17	:31
(Fourth Quarter)		
NU — Frank Vactor, 3-yd run (Rogers kick)	54-17	5:43
ISU — Stowe, 9-yd pass Carlson (pass failed)	54-23	1:53
ISU — Dave McCurry, 55-yd pass George Amundson (pass failed)	54-29	:42

By Mike Babcock

Dan Schneiss was a fullback, no question about it.

He had a fullback's size, at 6-foot-2 and 222 pounds. And he had a fullback's mentality.

"I was kind of an aggressive guy," he said.

But he wasn't an ordinary fullback. He was a high school quarterback in West Bend, Wis., and Nebraska recruited him as a defensive back. But when Al Montgomery, a running back from St. Paul, Minn., was sidelined by a knee injury, Schneiss moved to offense.

Montgomery was injured just before the Cornhuskers' first freshman game in 1967. And Schneiss immediately found a home in the

As a junior, Dan Schneiss was Nebraska's second-leading rusher and caught 20 passes for 208 yards and a touchdown.

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offensive backfield. He was third on the team in rushing that season. He was second on the team in receiving. And he was the team's most proficient passer.

He completed 4-of-5 passes, including one for a touchdown.

That spring, he was moved to full-back, the position for which he was best-suited.

At that time, the Cornhuskers still had a T-formation offensive philosophy. Coach Bob Devaney was "a hard-nosed guy with his offense," said Schneiss. "It was power football."

And it was out-dated football as far as some Nebraska fans were concerned following 6-4 records and no bowl invitations in 1967 and 1968. The disaffection was so great in 1968, in fact, that a group of boosters in Omaha circulated a petition calling for Devaney's dismissal.

The players weren't aware of the problem, Schneiss said. But "people had mentioned it to me."

Devaney weathered the storm, however, and turned a redesign of the offense over to his receivers coach, Tom Osborne. In 1969, "we went to a multiple offense," said Schneiss.

And things changed dramatically

for the program.

Schneiss's versatility was characteristic of the new spread-formation offense. Even though his first responsibility, and one he relished, was as a blocker, he was utilized in various ways.

As a junior, in addition to being the team's second-leading rusher, he caught 20 passes for 208 yards and a touchdown. "We always had safety-valve plays," he said. And he was the safety valve.

But he was more than an afterthought in an offense that set what was a school record for total offense (421.3 yards per game) and ranked second in the nation in scoring (37.2) in 1970.

Including the Orange Bowl game victory against LSU, Schneiss averaged 4.7 yards per carry. He caught 20 passes for 156 yards and two touchdowns. And he threw a 17-yard touchdown pass to Guy Ingles for the first points in the Cornhuskers' 21-21 tie with Southern California.

Even though Nebraska climbed from No. 9 to No. 8 in the Associated Press rankings after the tie, the Cornhuskers expected to win. "Everybody felt that way, without a doubt," said Schneiss. "We really felt confident going into that game. We

didn't think they were that much better than us."

The change in offensive philosophy and more aggressive recruiting were key elements of Nebraska's first national championship. "There was a lot of competition here," Schneiss said.

No one could afford to let down because someone else was behind him, eager to replace him.

Jeff Hughes, the junior punter for the 1970 team, "could have stepped in there and done the job" at wingback, according to Schneiss. But he was playing behind sophomore Johnny Rodgers.

Hughes "was a guy who could really fly," said Schneiss. And he pushed Rodgers.

Schneiss, a co-captain along with linebacker Jerry Murtaugh in 1970, was pushed by sophomore Bill Olds, as well as by a desire to succeed. "I didn't want to let anyone down," he said.

"You didn't want to let your teammates down, and when you had a bad game, you could."

He also didn't want to let down his parents, "who came down to watch all the games."

Schneiss followed Ron Kirkland, who played for the Cornhuskers

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from 1964 to 1966, to Nebraska. Kirkland also was from West Bend, and the two worked out together in the summers.

Because of Kirkland, Nebraska coaches "had been in our neighborhood," said Schneiss.

He picked the Cornhuskers over Purdue, primarily because "I liked Bob Devaney a little bit more than Jack Mollenkopf (the Purdue head coach)," he said. When he turned down the Boilermakers' scholarship offer, an unhappy Mollenkopf "thought that I should have gone to Wisconsin."

Schneiss was the definitive Devaney player, tough, no-nonsense. "I always loved to listen to him," Schneiss said. "He could get the hair on the back of my neck to stand up."

"He could relate to kids. He knew they weren't going to be perfect."

Schneiss has applied the lessons he learned under Devaney many times since returning to Nebraska after a tryout as an 11th-round draft pick of the New England Patriots in 1971.

He finished his degree and was hired along with former Cornhusker teammate Dave Morock to teach at Boys Town High School. Morock left after a year to go into private business.

Schneiss remained at Boys Town and has been at the school for 27 years, teaching and coaching.

He has been a football assistant the entire time and served as head basketball coach for 15 years. "When I went to Boys Town, I wasn't sure that God would keep us there," he said.

"It's exciting every day. You see kids who have a lot of anger in them. But you keep coaching a kid, being patient, and eventually they realize, 'Hey, this is a good place.'"

Schneiss married his high school sweetheart while he was at Nebraska, and he and Chris have raised two children of their own. Even though his affection for the program remains, he has had rare opportunities to attend games. "We do all our game preparation on Saturdays," he said. "We're doing our work. It's because of the kids. You want to give them every chance possible to succeed."

There's a little of Devaney in his attitude on the sideline.

"I never really saw him explode, where he was out of control," said Schneiss. "You can't be out of control as a coach. You've got to let the kids know you're confident."

The 1970 team was certainly that. "We thought we could beat every team we played," he said. ■



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New Philosophy

Defense among Collier's priorities in his first season at Nebraska

Barry Collier's system seems to have been well received by the players on his Nebraska men's basketball team. And that has come as no surprise to the 46-year-old Collier.

"I think they're receptive because they know I fill out the starting lineup," he said. "And as players, we're all motivated to do whatever's necessary to get on the floor when the clock's ticking."

Getting on the floor means accepting a new defensive philosophy.

And when "they see that it's going to work, they buy into it that much more," said Collier. "But I always think there's a proving ground to cross before you can get that total confidence."

"I'd say by and large they're buying in as much as I would have expected. I think it's very, very positive. They're not resistant to what we're doing. They know that we need to have a way to do things together rather than play (offense) one-on-one or defend one-on-one."

The freelance approach had disastrous consequences last season, when Coach Danny Nee's final Cornhusker team tied a school record by losing 19 of 30 games.

Defense is among Collier's priorities as he prepares for his first season at Nebraska. And from what he saw early on in preseason practice, defensive ability is a potential strength.

"We don't have the technique down yet, nor do I think we have the commitment to grind out 35 seconds at a time, 75 times a game, which is, on average, how many possessions you're going to play defensively," he said. "If what lies underneath there can be polished and brought out, we're going to be a pretty capable defensive team. Time will tell, of course."

In 11 seasons at Butler, his teams earned a reputation for playing defense. Last season, Bulldog opponents shot only .386 from the field and



Scott Bruhn

New Nebraska basketball coach Barry Collier works with redshirt freshman Ben Chesnut during a preseason practice.

averaged just 55.7 points per game.

Collier's goal was to put in three defenses by the team's first exhibition, while offensively, the plan was to put in "somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 or 25 set plays," he said.

The plays are learned by repetition, and "eventually they will not have to think about them," he said. "They'll know where they're going automatically and then can react to the defense."

Creating team chemistry also has been a priority during the preseason. Collier has four returning starters, all seniors: Cookie Belcher, who sat out last season following wrist surgery; Kimani Ffriend, a coaches' preseason all-conference selection; Steffon Bradford and Rodney Fields.

In addition, junior Cary Cochran started 11 games.

With senior Ross Buckendahl sidelined for the season because of a knee injury, walk-ons Craig Wortmann, a senior, and Ryan Thomas, a junior, are the only other players who saw any action at all last season — and neither played much. Wortmann got in two games, Thomas in one.

The remaining players are either new or coming off redshirts. Brian Conklin and Ben Chesnut, another walk-on, are redshirted freshmen. Marques McCarty is a true freshman. Kevin Augustine, Justin Boeker and Kedrick Ford all are junior college transfers, as is Danai Young.

Young will take a medical redshirt following major wrist surgery.

John Robinson II, a mid-year transfer from New Mexico, will be eligible for second semester, after sitting out a three-game suspension for an unspecified violation of team rules. Ffriend and Fields won't play until the home opener against Eastern Illinois on Nov. 21 for the same reason.

The three suspensions and the off-season dismissal of guard Danny Walker are evidence of the discipline Collier has brought to a program that seemed to lack it a year ago.

But "we're not in a situation where we want to look backward," Collier said. "We're just trying to teach the things we know we need to learn and to develop as much chemistry as possible."

"I think it's a real challenge. But I believe that same thing would be true year after year after year. You have a new group coming together and trying to formulate new roles and develop leaders.

"That challenge is there every year."

He began tackling that challenge immediately after Athletic Director Bill Byrne named him the 25th men's basketball coach in Cornhusker history. "The thing that I've done is test or evaluate the attitude of our team starting April 5," Collier said. "That's when I began to evaluate that."

The process really kicked into gear in mid-October, with the start of two-a-day practices.

"I can look at film," said Collier. "But you don't know what's being said in practices or on the court or in timeouts or in the locker room. So my whole measuring stick started on April 5, and I know we were not where we needed to be there. The problem was, we couldn't really be together that much."

From the beginning, however, it was apparent the players didn't want to "repeat last year's record and any problems they might have had," Collier said.

"They know them better than I do, those problems of last year. And I think they're working hard to keep away from repeating them."

The team figures to be built around Belcher and Ffriend.

But "that whole senior group are good athletes," said Collier.

As has been the case since Tyrone Lue left for the NBA two seasons ago, there will be a question mark at point guard. Augustine and Robinson are true point guards, and "we think that they will be able to really help us," Collier said, adding that other players also will get a look at the position.

Belcher, Cochran and Ford all could play the point, too. "But I think what we may end up doing is playing guards and not being focused so much on point guards," said Collier.

"I think this team could play three guards and two big guys.

"Whether they're just post and perimeter players, we'll find a way for that group to be successful. Once we get everybody functioning healthy, I think we'll be fine at each of the positions."

Belcher, whose wrist was 100-percent healed, was sidelined by a hamstring pull early in preseason practice, and Augustine was held out of practice because of a lower back strain.

At his first news conference in mid-October, Collier said the transition had gone well.

"It's been very straightforward, somewhat simple but not easy," he

2000-2001 Schedule	
Nov. 18 — at Oral Roberts, 2 p.m.; 21 — Eastern Illinois, 7:05 p.m.; 27 — Winthrop, 7:05 p.m.	State, 1:05 p.m.
Dec. 2 — at Pittsburgh, 6:30 p.m.; 8-9 — Husker Team Classic: Friday, Nebraska vs. UMKC, 6:30 p.m.; Alaska-Fairbanks vs. Pacific, 8:30 p.m.; Saturday, Consolation Game, 6 p.m.; Championship Game, 8:15 p.m.; 16 — Orange Bowl Classic: vs. Miami, Fla., Noon, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; 20-22 — San Juan Shootout: Wednesday, vs. Iona, 2:15 p.m.; Thursday, vs. Kent State/Northwestern, 2:15 p.m./4:15; 28 — at Minnesota, TBA; 30 — Murray	Jan. 2 — Creighton, 7:05 p.m.; 6 — at Missouri, 6 p.m.; 13 — Texas, 12:45 p.m.; 17 — at Kansas, 8 p.m.; 20 — Iowa State, 12:45 p.m.; 24 — Missouri, 7:05 p.m.; 27 — at Oklahoma, 12:45 p.m.; 30 — at Kansas State, 8 p.m.
	Feb. 3 — Colorado, TBA; 6 — Oklahoma State, 7:05 p.m.; 10 — at Baylor, 5 p.m.; 14 — Kansas State, 7:05 p.m.; 17 — at Colorado, 3 p.m.; 21 — at Texas Tech, 7 p.m.; 25 — Kansas, 3 p.m.; 28 — Texas A&M, 7:05 p.m.
	March 3 — at Iowa State, 3 p.m.; 8-11 — Big 12 Tournament, Kansas City

said. "I think that any time there's a change in any organization, you have some rough spots, adjustments to be made.

"But I've been pleased with it. I'm looking forward to coaching in the Devaney Center, with the lights on and a few fans in the stands. This is my favorite time of the year, though.

"We're finally to a time where we're on the floor with the whole team and working together toward something. Everything else is important, certainly, but it's not that scenario.

"For a basketball coach who loves to teach, this is the greatest time of the year." ■

Roster					
No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
1	Danai Young	F	6-4	190	Jr.
2	John Robinson II	G	6-1	185	Jr.
3	Cary Cochran**	G	6-1	185	Jr.
4	Justin Boeker	F/C	6-9	240	Jr.
5	Kedrick Ford	G	6-2	185	Jr.
10	Kevin Augustine	G	6-0	185	Jr.
11	Rodney Fields*	G	6-2	210	Sr.
15	Steffon Bradford*	F	6-6	240	Sr.
20	Brian Conklin	F/C	6-11	215	Fr.
23	Ross Buckendahl**	F	6-5	210	Sr.
30	Cookie Belcher***	G	6-4	205	Sr.
31	Kimani Ffriend*	C	6-11	220	Sr.
33	Marques McCarty	F	6-5	185	Fr.
34	Craig Wortmann**	G	6-4	195	Sr.
41	Ben Chesnut	F	6-6	210	Fr.
55	Ryan Thomas*	G	6-2	185	Jr.



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Early Contributions

Husker freshman Schrad gaining confidence every time she gets a chance to play

By Todd Henrichs

To Anna Schrad, something was different.

The freshman on the Nebraska volleyball team couldn't pinpoint exactly what it was, however. Seeing her first action, Schrad played well to open the season.

She expected some jitters but was unsure exactly what they would feel like.

"I think I was a little nervous, but I usually don't get that way," Schrad said. "When I get at all nervous, it's a big deal.

"But the team helped out, and I just played hard. My confidence keeps rising every game I get a chance to play."

Schrad is mature beyond her years. Though only 18, she has already played internationally and joined the volleyball program at Nebraska this fall as the most highly touted recruit in school history.

She played at Lincoln Pius X, from where Schrad earned first-team high school All-America honors from Volleyball magazine.

From the outset, Nebraska Coach John Cook said his goal was to bring Schrad along slowly. But in the rare matches when the Huskers have struggled, it's Schrad who has been called on to help rally NU.

Against Colorado State early in the season, Schrad came on with Nebraska down a game and provided four kills and a key block in the Huskers' victory.

Then on the road against Texas Tech, Schrad posted a career-best 14



Scott Braun

Freshman Anna Schrad ranked among the top 15 hitters in the Big 12 Conference with an efficiency mark of .329.

kills on .387 hitting. All of her statistics came after Nebraska had lost game two and seemed in danger of

losing a match for the first time all season.

"Anna had a great opportunity,

came in and made the most of it," Cook said. "That should be a real big confidence builder for her."

"We were stressed on the road, and she came in and did some really nice things."

Schrad earned her first career start at Iowa State.

Although Big 12 coached voted Schrad the preseason freshman of the year in the league, Cook's goal was to limit Schrad's early season play to give the freshman time to adjust to the collegiate level.

It's the same philosophy NU used last season with Amber Holmquist, a freshman who didn't start until mid-season but eventually led the Big 12 with a hitting percentage of .377. This year, Holmquist is hitting .408 and as the nation's leading blocker is a candidate for All-America honors.

Holmquist played in only five of NU's first 13 matches last year. Schrad, meanwhile, played in 37 of Nebraska's first 68 games this season. She typically spells Kim Behrends in the left-side position Schrad likely will inherit full-time next year.

"I talk to Anna all the time about the importance of her contribution," Cook said. "I thought she came in

and turned the Colorado State match around for us. We need her this season."

Cook said the international experience helped to develop Schrad as a collegiate player. The captain of the Junior National team, she led the U.S. to the 1999 zonal championship and a sixth-place finish in the world championships.

An athletic 6-foot-2 attacker, Schrad seems perfectly suited for Nebraska's system. With top-ranked NU off to a 19-0 start, Schrad ranked among the top 15 hitters in the Big 12 Conference with an efficiency mark of .329.

For the season, Schrad is averaging 2.09 kills per game. She has just 11 blocks, but for a freshman, Cook said Schrad is as skilled a blocker as he has ever seen.

Opposing coaches just shake their head upon seeing a player of Schrad's ability step off the bench.

In practice, Schrad works out mostly with the first team. Occasionally, that provides her an opportunity to work against two-time All-American Nancy Meendering. A redshirt this season, Meendering practices every day

against NU's top unit.

Schrad enjoys the opportunity to learn from Meendering, as much as she will enjoy playing with one of the nation's best players next year.

"Anytime you're around somebody who is that caliber of player, you have to take advantage of what they know," she said.

Schrad, too, brings out the best in her teammates. When Nebraska met Michigan State earlier this season, Schrad was reunited with Nikki Colson, her Pius X teammate and a freshman setter with the Spartans this season.

Schrad was a teammate of Amy Sibbernson of Omaha Marian on the Nebraska Juniors club team that finished as high as third in national tournaments. Sibbernson started in her first career match with Michigan State this season.

With all her experience, Schrad isn't the least bit overwhelmed by her early success at NU. In fact, Schrad is intent on continuing to improve and becoming one of the best to ever wear a Nebraska uniform.

"I always expect myself to do well," she said. "It doesn't change, no matter what the situation is." ■

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**HANA
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Cover Corners Hot Commodity

*Increased passing
by Big 12 teams
makes secondary
a priority*

By James Hale

If a team is going to be successful in College Football 2000, it must be very good at quarterback and cornerback.

Sure, you have to be talented in the trenches, but if you can't play out on the edge, where big plays can happen on every play, then you will struggle in today's football.

Not only must you be good at cor-

Nebraska Commitments for 2001

Player	Hometown (school)	Ht.	Wt.	Pos.
Seppo Ewvaraye	Laurel (Laurel-Concord), Neb.	6-5	323	OL/DL
Jared Helming	Springfield (Kickapoo), Mo.	6-4	270	DT
Richie Incognito	Glendale (Mountain View), Ariz.	6-4	285	OL
Mike McLaughlin	Omaha (Millard North), Neb.	6-1	175	QB
Gary Pike	Pueblo (Centennial), Colo.	6-5	275	OL
Cory Ross	Denver (Thomas Jefferson), Colo.	5-9	182	DB/WR
Barrett Ruud	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-2	220	LB
Dan Stevenson	Barrington, Ill.	6-6	305	OL
Mike Stuntz	Council Bluffs (St. Albert), Iowa	6-2	180	QB

nerback, but you must have at least four corners who can really cover. Two are needed as starters and the additional two are needed for bonus coverage.

With pass-happy teams such as

Oklahoma, Texas Tech and Kansas State throwing 35 to 40 passes a game, Nebraska plays at least half its defensive plays with multiple defensive backs on the field, and many times that means additional cornerbacks.

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Nebraska is always very athletic at cornerback, and many times their best athletes line up at the position. You can't take anything for granted in college football today, and if teams are going to put sprinters at wide receivers, a defense must counter with similar talent.

The Cornhuskers had an early commitment from one of the top cornerbacks in the country in Cory Ross (5-foot-9 and 182 pounds, with 4.41-second speed in the 40-yard dash) of Denver (Jefferson), Colo. We say had because is now appears that Ross wants to take other visits.

Ross was one of the first players to commit to the Huskers back in the summer, but since then he has been the guest of Colorado and now says he may take two or three visits to make sure he is making the right decision.

"I am still committed to Nebraska, but I feel it would be in my best interest if I still took a visit or two just to make sure I am making the right decision," Ross said. "I committed back in the summer without really looking around.

"I know about a lot of colleges because my brother Roger was heavily recruited. I don't have any doubts that Nebraska is a great college and a great one for me, but I can certainly make sure of that by visiting another school just to make sure."

Ross said he will probably make an official visit to Colorado, and he is also talking to Kansas, where his brother is a starting wide receiver. Miami and Tennessee are also possibilities. More than likely Ross will still wind up at Nebraska, but when an athlete starts taking officials visit elsewhere, you really can't say that he is a solid commitment.

Brett Bell (6-0, 180, 4.5) of Wheaton (Warrenville South), Ill., would like to learn a lot more about Nebraska. Actually, Bell hasn't been all that worried about recruiting. Rated as one of the top five cornerbacks in the country, Bell tore his ACL in the second game of the season, and he has done nothing but rehabilitate the knee, so that he is ready for preseason workouts next summer.

"I only played in one game, and I did pretty well in that game," Bell said. "I had about 78 yards rushing and four tackles on defense. However, that game is almost a distant memory now, because after tearing my ACL, I have done nothing but have surgery and rehab me knee.

"The rehab is coming along great. I am walking without a brace most of the time and I almost have my full

Sooners get Shaw; Californian Eyes NU

Oklahoma continued to take advantage of its recent rise in the polls by adding its eight oral commitment toward its 2000 recruiting class.

All-American running back Seymore Shaw (6-0 1/2, 208, 4.55) of Shawnee, Okla., is the highest rated player the Sooners have committed. Shaw wants to stay in-state and chose the Sooners over Oklahoma State. He briefly thought about visiting Nebraska three weeks ago, before deciding he was tired of recruiting.

— Often it is not the most heralded players who draw the most attention once December rolls around in recruiting. A perfect example is running back Tyler Ebell of Ventura, Calif.

Ebell was a relative unknown at the beginning of the year, but through seven games he has rushed for 2,386 yards and 33 touchdowns. That's an amazing 350 yards per game and 12.7 yards per carry.

Ebell wasn't sure who was going to offer him at the beginning of the year, but now he has offers from Washington, UCLA and Arizona. He wants to keep the other two visits open because he hopes a school like Nebraska might get interested late.

"I figure my stock is going to continue to rise, and I don't want to lock myself in to five schools early and then regret that I would have to turn down an opportunity to visit a great school like Nebraska," Ebell said. "I am still weighing my options, and I hope to get something going with Nebraska pretty soon. Nobody runs the ball like the Cornhuskers, and I just want to wait and see what happens over the next few weeks."

— Dennis Erickson is beginning to build quite a power at Oregon State. The Beavers have been ranked in the top 20 all year and landed in the top 10 in the recent BCS poll.

Erickson is making quite an impact in recruiting as well. Already, he has a commitment from quarterback Derek Anderson (6-6, 220, 4.8) of Scappoose, Ore., who is rated as one of the top 10 quarterbacks in the country. Now, he is close to getting a commitment from All-America running back Josh Farrell of Lake Elsinore, Calif.

Farrell has already visited the Beavers and is ready to shut recruiting down. Farrell had 941 yards and 13 touchdowns through seven games.

— Nebraska is no longer the solid leader for offensive lineman Blake Larson of Atlantic, Iowa. Larson recently visited the facilities at Tennessee and now says he needs to think about some things.

"I almost committed to Nebraska, but I really owe it to myself to take all my visits," Larson said. "Nebraska is still the front-runner, but I was very impressed with Tennessee, and I need to see what is out there for me."

Larson will take an unofficial visit to Notre Dame and he has set official visits to Colorado and Miami. He is leaning toward Michigan State for his fourth visit and then he says he may take his final visit to Nebraska.

Larson had been to Nebraska on an unofficial visit and had stated he didn't feel it was necessary for him to take an official visit. However, the Huskers want him to take an official visit, and he is considering it. ■

range of motion back in my knee. I do a lot of tram and bike, plus I am doing slow squats, which is increasing the strength in my knee. I have really tried to turn the injury into a positive. I want to become stronger both physically and mentally. I feel I will be a better athlete all the way around after rehabbing my knee."

Bell is leaning toward Michigan or Wisconsin, however, he said Nebraska still has an offer on the table, along with Illinois, Penn State,

Miami, Washington and Florida.

"It was really nice of Nebraska to keep their scholarship offer open for me," Bell said. "I like their style of defense and how their cornerbacks play aggressive at the line of scrimmage.

"I could grab some early playing time as a freshman. I don't know that much else about Nebraska, but I feel their program is so good that I need to check them out. I don't know if I will visit Nebraska, but I feel I probably

should. I am going to Wisconsin and Illinois, and I am working on Michigan. I hope to work on a visit to Nebraska as well."

Last season, Bell made 80 tackles and had 14 knockdowns. Teams only tested him in the air about once a game.

Antrel Rolle (6-0, 200, 4.45) of Homestead (South Dade), Fla., may be the best pure cornerback in the country. He has good size, which all college coaches covet and the physical strength to shut down wide receivers at the line of scrimmage. Rolle can bench press 330 pounds.

Rolle has three interceptions and 57 tackles this season. He also has been a major contributor as a punt returner, with returns for touchdowns of 67, 61, 70 and 79 yards.

Notre Dame will get his first visit, followed by Florida and Miami the following weekend. Nebraska is in contention for one of the remaining two visits, along with North Carolina State and Notre Dame.

"I really don't know that much about Nebraska, but I am sure it would be a great place to check out,"

Rolle said. "I would like to visit there and hope that will take place."

Quan Cosby (5-10, 180, 4.3) of Mart, Texas, is one of the best pure athletes in the country. Some programs like him on offense, and some like him on defense. Nebraska likes him as a cornerback and a possible kick and punt returner, and that is a good place to start.

Cosby is an option quarterback in high school and plays cornerback and free safety on defense.

He has been able to keep his college choices open and to himself for the most part. Cosby refuses to name a leader and usually names 10 to 15 colleges he is still interested in. Nebraska is one of the potentials, along with Florida State, Texas, Texas A&M, Oklahoma and UCLA. When Cosby has talked about schools, the Seminoles are usually one of the first schools he mentions.

Eric Bassey (6-1, 170, 4.45) of Garland (North), Texas, is an outstanding athlete who is being recruited on both sides of the ball. Bassey has maintained a solid interest in Texas and Texas A&M, with Miami,

Nebraska, Arkansas and Baylor in the loop.

Danielle Manning (5-11, 184, 4.44) of Corsicana, Texas, is a sleeper out of the Lone Star State who has grabbed Nebraska's attention. Manning has given Texas A&M a commitment, but he is still planning on taking visits to Texas and Nebraska. Manning is a top cover corner at the line of scrimmage.

The Huskers are still working to get a solid chance at Dominic Robinson (6-1, 192, 4.42) of Diamond Bar, Calif.

Robinson is a gifted athlete who some believe his is one of the top five players in the country. He has set a visit with Florida State, and the Seminoles have taken the early lead. Tennessee has drawn even with Washington, behind the Seminoles, and Nebraska and Ohio State hope to also get visits.

Terrance Whitehead (5-9, 185, 4.44) of Los Angeles (Crenshaw) is another top cover corner from the State of California. Whitehead is looking to leave the state and lists Michigan and Ohio State ahead of Nebraska, Arizona and USC. ■

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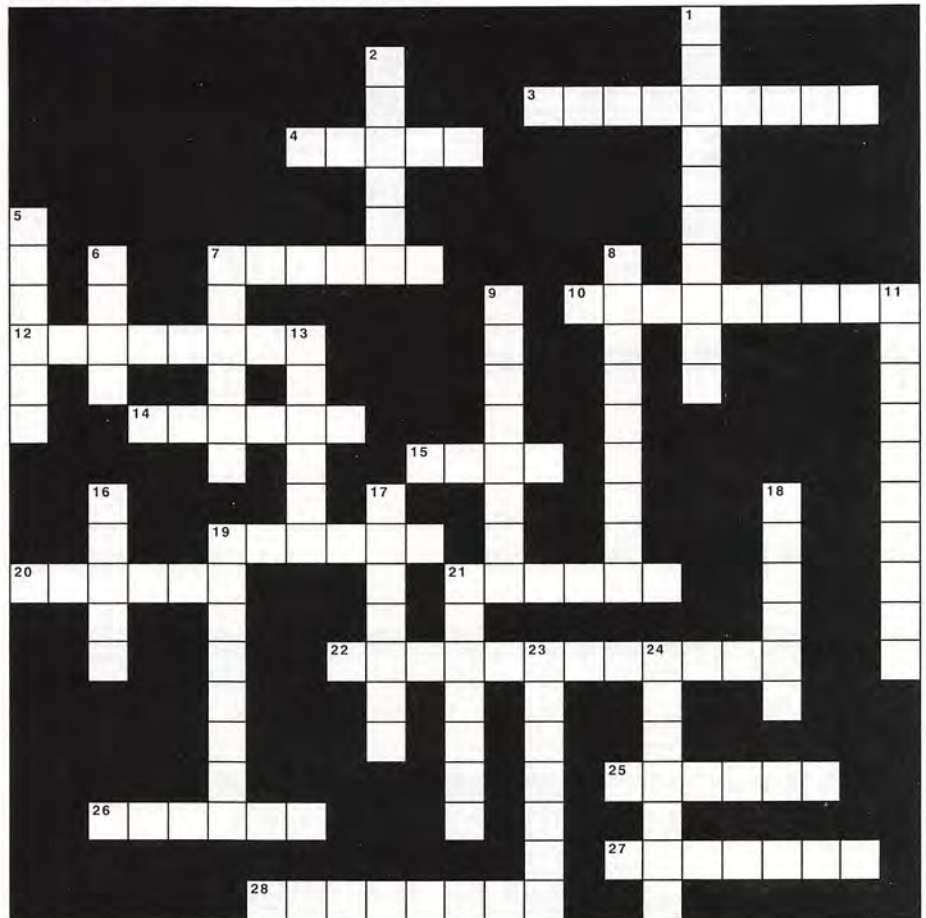
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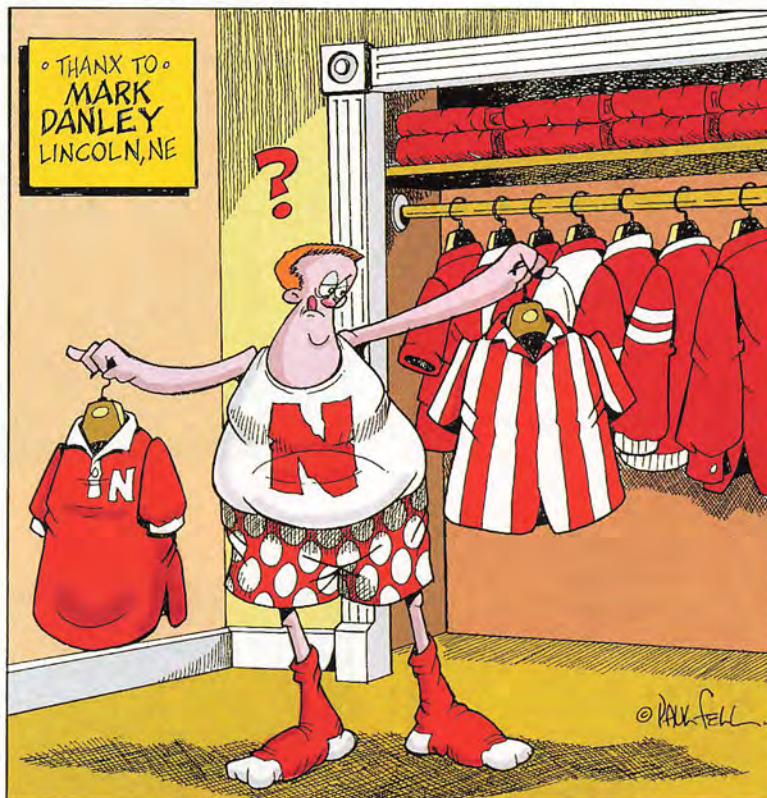
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Answers in Nov. 24 issue



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Making Statements

Vanden Bosch says Huskers 'took a big step in the right direction'



Mike BABCOCK

KYLE VANDEN BOSCH could see it in his teammates' eyes.

"We wanted it bad," he said after Nebraska's 56-17 victory against Kansas. "We let one get away last week, so we felt we really needed to convince ourselves, convince our fans and people around the country, that we're still capable of coming out and dominating a game for four quarters."

The Cornhuskers' senior rush end and co-captain spoke on behalf of the defense. But his words applied equally to the offense. "After we lost, we had a sense of urgency again," he said. "We knew we weren't where we needed to be, and today we took a big step in the right direction."

The direction Vanden Bosch and his teammates ultimately want to go is south to Miami, to play in the Orange Bowl game on Jan. 3. That's where the Bowl Championship Series national title game will be played. And Nebraska still has a chance to get there, despite its loss to Oklahoma.

The Cornhuskers were fourth in the BCS standings prior to the Kansas game.

And they were looking to make a statement on a day when the second team in the standings, previously undefeated Virginia Tech, lost decisively to the fifth team, Miami, 41-21.

In addition, No. 1 Oklahoma continued to win, defeating overmatched Baylor 56-7, and No. 3 Florida State moved closer to one of the Orange Bowl berths, defeating Clemson 54-7.

So it was incumbent on Nebraska to win impressively, to keep pace with the others, as well as to build confidence for its next big test at Kansas State, which made short work of Iowa State, 56-10.

The Cornhuskers need to beat Kansas State and Colorado in order to assure themselves of a spot in the Big 12 championship game at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City on Dec. 2.

"Statements need to be made," Nebraska Coach Frank Solich said.

"I don't think there's any question about it. As you go down the stretch, every team that's involved in trying to win a conference title, every team that's involved in trying to get as high of a rating as you possibly can in the national rankings needs to make statements.

"We, I thought to a degree, did that. And I was very pleased that it was done in all areas."

The Cornhuskers didn't have significant breakdowns in any aspect of their play against a Kansas team that came to Memorial Stadium with a 4-4 record and little hope of pulling an upset.

The Oklahoma loss got Nebraska's attention, and Kansas got the Cornhuskers' best shot. "Everybody had the mindset that we wanted to get the job done," said cornerback Keyuo Craver.

Whether or not Nebraska was back where it left off prior to the Oklahoma game, "I don't know," Solich said. "That's probably tough to answer. I thought in some ways we've shown progress to the point where maybe we're playing, in some ways, a little better.

"I was real satisfied with where we're at. I was real satisfied with the progress we have made throughout the course of the year. Last week was a setback, but this week we picked up on it again and maybe picked up on it where we left off. And that's encouraging."

The Oklahoma game notwithstanding, "I think our team has played well for most of the season. They've responded in most cases whenever they needed to make it work," said Solich.

"They wanted to get back to doing that. And I felt very pleased, as the rest of our coaches did after the game, with the way they went about playing this football game, as much as anything.

"They went about it with a great deal of energy, with wanting to play great football. They went about it with encouraging one another and being very, very unified out there.

"Any time that occurs, you feel good about it."

Nebraska has been characterized by its resiliency. The last time it lost consecutive games was in 1990, against Oklahoma (45-10) and then a little over a month later against Georgia Tech (45-21) in the Citrus Bowl. And the last time it lost games on consecutive Saturdays was in 1968.

Kansas (23-13) and Missouri (16-14) beat the Cornhuskers at Memorial Stadium, no less, on back-to-back Saturdays in October of 1968.

That also was the last Kansas victory in the series.

Kansas State, Nebraska's next opponent, also won at Lincoln in 1968 (12-0). And the Wildcats have won only once since then, 40-30 at Manhattan two seasons ago.

Kansas State climbed to second in the national rankings before losing at home to Oklahoma. And two weeks later it lost to Texas A&M. Despite the losses, however, "I think they're an excellent football team," Solich said of the Wildcats. "I think they're very well coached. I think they're like some other teams this year that at times have played great and at times have not played maybe the way they hoped they would have played. But that's true with almost everybody in the country at this point."

With Virginia Tech's loss against Miami and a San Jose State upset of Texas Christian, Oklahoma is the only undefeated team in the BCS standings. So at least one of the teams in the Orange Bowl game will have a loss. And if Nebraska can win its remaining games, both teams will.

"We're not doubting ourselves, and we're real excited about where we are and the big game next week," Vanden Bosch said. But "we still have to improve, and have a good week of practice." ■



Frank Solich said he was encouraged by the performance.



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